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Oregon Josh,

THE WIZARD RIFLE;

OR,

The Young Trapper Champion.

BY ROGER STARBUCK,
AUTHOR OF "THE BOY PROSPECTOR," "KENTUCKY BEN," "BLACK HORSE BILL," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE DANGER SIGNAL.

"WAAL, George, how's free trappin' ag'in? I reckon yer find it more to yer likin' than bobbin' on the lakes in an old fore-and-arfter."

The speaker was Josh Jones, or "Oregon Josh," as he was usually termed—a middle-aged trapper from the southwest part of Oregon.

By many of the Indians, he was called "The Wizard Rifle," and well did he deserve the name, owing to the wonderful and deadly accuracy of his aim. The belt about his waist confining his fringed hunting-shirt of buckskin, contained a knife with a curiously carved handle and a pistol whose mountings were polished to shine like silver. His rifle was placed against the trunk of a tree within easy reach of his hand as he reclined near the fire, over which the dinner of fried venison and corn-meal cakes, of which he and his companion were partaking, had lately been prepared. This companion—the one to whom he had just spoken, was a healthy, manly-looking youth of seventeen. The proportions of his well-rounded, vigorous form were set off to advantage by his buckskin hunting-garb, which, excepting a sash, instead of a belt about his waist, was similar to that of his friend. He had brown hair, clear blue eyes, a straight nose, and a smooth, oval face, deeply tanned by sun and wind.

"I like the change, friend Josh," he replied, in answer to the question put to him. "Besides, it is more profitable than coasting on the lakes. The furs and peltries we sold at Fort Colville to the traders, a week ago, brought me in more than two years' cruising would have done."

"To say nothin' of the profit we made on our horses, which we sold thar for nigh on twice as much as we paid fur 'em. I hardly liked parting with the animiles, but 'it war the best thing we could do, though we'll now hev to foot it to Pacific City, 'fore we kin git more."

"That's not much of a tramp," said George, indifferently. "We're a little to the south of Mount Olympus, now, not ten miles from the Oregon coast."

At that moment both heard a slight rustling in the brush that skirted the little grove of firs in which they had halted. They were on their feet in an instant, to behold an Indian emerge from the shrubbery and approach them. He was a miserable-looking old man, naked, with the exception of a piece of buffalo-skin about the middle. He was of short stature, thin and bowed, with his hair hanging like masses of tattered seaweed about his shoulders.

"A poor shucker, ef I aren't mistook," said

Josh. "Come on, and let's heer what yer want, old hoss," he continued, as the Indian paused with a shy, timid look.

"Woulloo want eat," he said, glancing wistfully at the remains of the repast.

"Hyar, then," said Josh, tossing some of the venison to the Indian; "help yourself, but how is it yer can't hunt yer own game?"

"Woulloo poor root-digger. Okanagans come and steal his bow and arrows. He can shoot no more. Okanagans beat old man, too."

And he showed some recent scars upon his back.

The moment he had finished eating he pointed to the north and east.

"Okanagan watch for schooner. Want to take—want to kill crew. Schooner will come for trade with Okanagan. Then look out! There will be blood!"

"Thunder! yer don't say so! Whar is this schooner that the reds want to take?"

"Not come yet; will come before many hour. Me hear Okanagan say so."

"And where mou't them cussed Okes be, now?"

"'Bout t'ree mile off. Hurry to get to coast. Schooner come that way."

"By the Lord! then we'll git ahead on 'em!" cried Josh. "We must not see our white brothers stuck like pigs."

"No! no!" cried George. "Let us start at once!"

Slinging rifles and wallets, away went the two, making good speed toward the coast to the northeast, which lies opposite Vancouver's Island.

They had not proceeded far when in the distance, on their left, they saw the forms of the Okanagans also speeding toward the coast.

The two trappers endeavored to get ahead of the party, but the swift-footed Indians, moving with their long, steady stride, gave them no chance to do so.

It was an exciting walking-match.

That the Okanagans saw the twain, and even guessed their intention, Josh did not doubt, although the party appeared not to notice them.

As night approached Josh said to his companion:

"They'll try to hinder us—yer kin be shore, but we'll sarcumvent 'em thar."

"How will we do it?"

"By strikin' off more to the west'ard."

"May we not miss the craft, that way?" inquired George.

"No. Ef yer look sharp, yer kin see her now."

They were on the summit of a hill which afforded them a view of the coast and of the water beyond.

Far away, in the light mist overhanging the sea, George saw something white.

He smiled.

"That is not a schooner's sail," he said.

"I'd like to know what it is then?"

"It is only a canoe with a sail out."

"Are yer shore?"

"I am."

"Waal that proves that ev'ry man knows his own bizness best. I war never a sailor, and don't want to be."

"The Indians have made your mistake. The mist magnifies the sail. They think it is the schooner's and are now going for it."

The two paused, waiting until the Indians were out of sight on their new course, and then continued their way to the north and eastward.

They walked all night with only one brief interval of rest, and at dawn they reached the coast.

Climbing a rock, they looked seaward, but a mist covered the water a league from land and they could see no sign of any vessel.

"I sw'ar I b'lieve yer've made a mistake, George, and that I war right arter all," said Josh. "What yer said war a canoe must hev been the schooner."

George smiled. Then he inclined his ear toward the water.

"She is coming," he said.

"I kin see nothin'."

"No, but if you listen, you'll hear the rattling of canvas."

"Right, boy, I heer it now."

Five minutes later a schooner came to view out of the mist, heading shoreward.

"We must signal her," said George.

He attached his kerchief to the ramrod of his rifle and waved it.

There was no response to the signal. The vessel tacked and stood off again into the mist.

"They think we are beach-combers, who sometimes beg the captains of vessels for rum or tobacco, with no money to pay for it," said George. "They want nothing to do with us!"

"That's mortil bad! Ef we don't git a chance to warn 'em they are gone coons for sartint. I must git aboard somehow and let them know of the bloody prospec' in store for 'em. I think I see an empty canoe jist below us in the cove thar."

"You may not succeed in reaching them, Josh."

"I kin try. You stay ashore hyar and keep on signalin'. They may heed yer arter awhile."

The trapper was soon in the canoe, which proved to be a leaky one. By dint of alternate bailing and paddling, however, he made some progress.

The people aboard the schooner had seen the signal.

"Some begging beach-comber," remarked the captain, whose name was Williams.

"Ay, ay," said his chief mate, a half breed named Robert Lefferts—a dark, scowling young man of nineteen, who, before he shipped with Captain Williams, had been second officer aboard one of the Northwest Company's trading-vessels. "You may be sure of it. Wouldn't mind the signal at all if I were you."

"But it might be something important," suggested Rose Williams, a pretty, dark-eyed girl of fifteen, who had accompanied her uncle, the skipper, on his voyage. "Let me look through the glass."

Her uncle gave her the glass.

"It is a boy who is making the signal. What a nice-looking boy he is! I am sure *he* is no beggar!" cried the girl.

Lefferts scowled. It was solely for the pur-

pose of being near Rose, whom he wanted to make his wife, that he had left the service of the Northwest Company to sail with Captain Williams.

"I think we ought to mind the signal," continued Rose. "Suppose you and I go ashore, uncle, and see what he has to say."

"No, no; I would not think of it," said Lefferts. "We'd only lose time."

"Ay, ay, I'm afraid so," said the captain.

Rose pouted. Woman-like, she seemed determined not to drop the subject.

Soon after the vessel entered the mist-cloud the skipper was obliged to tack, and this finally again brought to view the boy on the rock. The girl had said she would go ashore if no one else would. She felt sure the signaler had something important to say, and she would learn what it was.

The captain finally consented. He backed his fore-topsail—for the schooner was square-rigged—and dropped the punt alongside.

Rose knew how to handle an oar or a paddle. As there were paddles in the little boat, she used these.

The mist was thickening, so that the people aboard did not see the girl after she landed. The moment her boat touched the shore, George descended the rock and advanced to meet her. Her bright black eyes, rosy cheeks, and supple, swaying figure, as she walked, did not fail to arouse the boy's admiration.

Lifting his cap and bowing respectfully, he said:

"I was afraid no one would come. There is great danger for your people, or I would not have troubled you."

CHAPTER II.

A PERILOUS SITUATION.

In a few words George explained.

"I knew you had something important to say, although my uncle, the captain, wouldn't believe it!" cried Rose. "Oh, dear! I must get back as soon as I can to tell him."

"Had you not better rest yourself first? A friend of mine—a trapper—has gone off in a canoe for the schooner, and is probably by this time aboard with the news."

"I am not at all tired, and I had better go back at once," said Rose, at the same time, however, looking round her for a seat.

George soon found one for her on a flat rock, over which he spread a rubber blanket taken from his wallet.

"I really must not stay!" said Rose, as she sat down. "Where are those Indians who want to capture the vessel and massacre the crew?"

"They cannot be more than a mile off."

"This will spoil all of uncle's plans," said Rose. "He has brought lots of things aboard the Canton for trade with the natives. I should think *you* would feel afraid, all alone here."

"I am used to Indians," said George, "but of course you can never tell when a savage will go back on you."

"Oh, my!" cried Rose, suddenly.

An Indian had emerged from a hollow in the rocks near them. He was of short stature, broad in chest and a little bowed, with crooked legs, and broad, flat feet. His wide face, with

its high cheek-bones, flat head and keen, little black eyes, reminded the spectators of a turtle. He had long black hair, there was a string of shells about his neck, a sort of short deerskin frock fastened about the waist, was his only robe. He had bow and arrows, and also a long spear, the latter of which might be used either for fish or against an enemy.

He walked straight toward the boat, jumped into it and examined it.

"Ugh! berry well!" he grunted. "It is good!"

As he spoke he was about to unfasten the warp from the rocky spur to which Rose had secured it.

"Hold there! what are you going to do?" said George.

"Berry good!" grunted the savage, again, "good trade! White man take Shewie's canoe! Well—Shewie take little boat, all same!"

"I rather think you would have the best of the bargain," said George. "Your canoe was an old, half-broken one—nearly useless—while this is a good boat."

"No—take boat for canoe!"

And the Indian would actually have paddled off with his prize, had not the boy seized the boat by the bow and held it.

"How?" cried the savage. "You come 'teal canoe, and no give nothing? That is wrong."

"My friend has only borrowed it. He will bring it back. Besides this is not *his* boat. It belongs to this young lady."

"Ugh!" said the savage, who had not once appeared to notice the girl.

"It is well! I go 'board soon and in dis boat to get my canoe—to bring it back!"

"No, that won't do."

The savage turned his glittering black eyes fiercely on the speaker, and his hand wandered to a tomahawk in his belt.

"Come, get out of the boat!" cried George, losing patience.

He drew his pistol as he spoke, for he had good reason to believe that the Indian was about to hurl the tomahawk at his head.

The pistol seemed to change his intention. He got out of the boat, and moved off among the rocks.

"I am so glad he is gone!" gasped Rose. "I felt afraid he would scalp you. I had better go back to the schooner, and *you* can go with me."

As she spoke she moved toward the boat.

"You had better go! I will wait for my friend," said George.

He was about to help her into the light craft, when a tomahawk came whistling through the air, narrowly missing the boy's ear!

Ere he could turn, Shewie was close upon him, about to push the point of his spear through his back.

This he would have done, had not Rose seen the movement in time to pull the youth toward her by the arm.

In a moment George had his pistol pointed at the head of the savage, but, before he could fire, the latter dodged behind a rock, and again disappeared.

The next moment a cry of surprise and dismay escaped Rose, for she *now* saw her boat receding swiftly alongshore!

It was evident that a couple of savages, keeping themselves screened by long reeds, growing for some distance along the water's edge, were drawing the boat away by its keel.

George raised his rifle, but, at that instant, a wild whoop was heard near, and the two beheld about twenty armed Indians, headed by Shewie, running toward them.

"Oh, what shall we do, now?" inquired Rose. "My boat is gone!"

"Do not be afraid. I will protect you so long as I am alive!" replied George.

"Let us run. You will be killed!" cried the girl.

"This way," said George, as he assisted his fair companion into a hollow in the rock upon which he had stood. "Only one at a time can enter here!"

The hollow, or rather passage, was about ten feet long, and four broad, with a projection near the entrance, which would afford shelter to the lad while he fired upon his foes.

He placed Rose behind him, and with his gaze fixed upon the narrow entrance, he held his rifle ready.

The opening facing the water also commanded a view of it, so that he would be able to see the schooner when the mist should clear, and look for assistance from that quarter.

A long time passed—yet no savages appeared at the entrance.

"I believe they have gone," said Rose. "Let us go out."

"No; that is what they want us to do. They know exactly where we are."

As the boy spoke he saw the face of Shewie thrust round the edge of the rock into the hollow.

He raised his rifle, but the wily savage drew quickly back.

"You see they are afraid to enter," said the youth to his companion.

Just then a huge fragment of rock tumbled down over the entrance, half-blocking it up. Another quickly followed it, and the opening was entirely closed.

"God help us now!" cried Rose. "Here we are, as if shut in a tomb. They mean to starve us to death!"

"They'll not succeed for some time," replied George. "I have provisions enough in my wallet to last for several days. Meanwhile your people will probably come to look for you."

"And will all be massacred?" answered Rose. "It was very wrong for me to leave the schooner!"

Hours passed. George advanced to the blocked entrance, and peering through a crevice in the rocks, he perceived that the fog had lifted.

Directly ahead of him, not two miles off, lay the Canton, with her foretop-sail aback.

Several men aft with glasses were looking shoreward. George could see no sign of the Indians. This made him a little uneasy. He feared that they were concealed among the rocks near the water, expecting that a party would come from the schooner in search of the girl. The moment the party should land the savages probably intended to pounce suddenly upon them, and kill every man.

CHAPTER III.

A QUARREL.

"HILLO thar! Whar are yer?" called Josh Jones, as he paddled in the midst of the fog, which had so thickly gathered after he started off in the canoe, that he was unable to see any sign of the craft he wanted to board.

There was no reply to his shout. He paused and listened, however, to finally hear the sound of flapping canvas.

This took him in the right direction. He reached the schooner about a quarter of an hour after Rose had left it.

The captain threw him a rope, and he was soon aboard.

"How do? how do?" he cried, shaking hands with the skipper, and also with Lefferts, who did not return the grasp very cordially. The truth was the young mate was in a sulky humor about Rose's going ashore to meet the boy who had signaled.

"I've comed to warn yer," said Josh, thumping the deck with the butt of his long rifle. "I reckon yer meant to go 'shore to trade with the Injuns, thar. Waal don't yer go!"

"Why?"

Josh told him.

"Ay, ay, now!" cried the skipper, aghast. "You don't say so! And I have just allowed my niece to go to meet a boy who was signaling, that she might see what he wanted. Perhaps that boy is some rascal in league with them infernal pow-wows!"

"Hold up thar, ef you please. George Wilson are as fine a young chap as ever cracked a rifle. He signaled 'cause he wanted to let yer know what yer mou't expect from the Injuns. As yer didn't mind us, I comed off in a canoe, as I reckined I ought to do all that a mortil could to save yer."

"Thanks; but it's a blasted pity you didn't bring the boy 'long with you; then Rose would not have gone ashore, and got herself in trouble."

"The canoe war a shaky one, and wouldn't 'a' held two on us," replied Josh. "But one thing yer kin be sartint on, which are that George will purtect yer gal, while thar's a limb of him left. He are as brave as he are good-looking."

Here Lefferts scowled and clinched his fists.

"Curse his looks!" he growled.

"Hillo! What's that?" inquired Josh, turning on his heel with that lightning-like motion peculiar to men who have to deal with treacherous Indians. "Be keerful! Please remember the boy are a friend o' mine!"

"It does not signify," carelessly replied Lefferts.

"What doesn't signerfy? Come! out with it, ef yer please!"

"What I said. However, I've no objection to repeating it. I said 'Curse his looks!'"

"Which yer had no bizness to do. The lad hasn't harmed you that I know on. On the t'other boot, he wants to help yer."

"I want none of his help," said the mate, with a scowl, as he walked away.

"What's the matter with yer mate?" inquired Josh. "He are as touchy as a b'ar with a gnat in his ear."

The captain gave his pug nose a twist, winked and laid his finger on his heart.

Josh stared at him in a puzzled fashion.

"I aren't good at guessin' riddles," he remarked. "Speak out plain, ef yer please."

"Jealousy!" whispered the skipper. "D'ye twig, now?"

"Yes, and by the 'tarnal! I'm sorry. Are they engaged?"

"No; blow me if I think Rose wants to be!"

"Waal, capt'in, yer better lower a boat and go arter yer gal soon as yer kin. The Injuns are not far off, and the sooner yer git her back hyar the better."

"Ay, ay, that's my opinion, too."

The Canton's crew consisted of ten men, five of whom were now armed for the expedition.

"I forgot," said Lefferts, coming up, "that our quarter-boat—the only one we now have aboard—was cracked by the late gale we had, and will need repairing before we can start."

"How long will it take?" inquired Josh of the captain.

"Four good hours."

"That's onfortunit!" cried Josh. "The boy and the gal mou't both be scalped 'fore then."

The crack of several rifles, followed by a girl's piercing shriek, was heard coming from the direction of the shore, now not a mile off. The fog, which had cleared before this and enabled Lefferts and one of the men to scan the coast with their glasses, had again thickened, so that the land could not be seen.

Lefferts nodded his head and compressed his lips.

"There's your brave boy for you," he said, contemptuously. "The cowardly young scamp has probably run away to leave the girl to shift for herself."

Scarce had the words passed him when the iron grip of Josh was upon his collar.

"Liar!" roared the trapper, his eyes blazing like a tiger's. "Pologize at oncet for yer 'farnal falsity, or I'll shake all the ha'r out of yer head!"

Lefferts struck at him, when the trapper hurled him to the deck.

But the next moment Josh was helpless.

A block aloft, which had been loosened by the jar of the mate's body against the rigging, dropped upon his head, and he fell upon the deck as if he had been shot.

Lefferts, black with rage, had drawn a clasp-knife, which, in spite of the hunter's helpless condition, he would have driven between his ribs, had not the captain caught his arm.

"Avast there, boy! What would you do?" he cried, sternly. "There shall be no such bloody work aboard my craft!"

Lefferts, with a low growl of rage, returned his knife to his pocket.

Full of anxiety for his niece, the captain realized how unfortunate was the accident to Josh at this particular moment.

He set the steward to bringing him to, while he superintended the lowering of the boat, which the carpenter had now finished repairing.

"See to the schooner, Lefferts, while I'm absent," he cried, as, with five armed men, he sprang into the boat alongside.

The men soon were pulling swiftly shoreward.

the captain keeping a keen lookout through the fog.

He had been so taken up with the thought of rescuing his niece that it had not once occurred to him that, during his absence, Lefferts might attempt to inflict some serious injury upon Josh.

The boat was soon near enough to the shore to afford the skipper a good view of it. He saw no human being. Masses of rocks, with some shrubbery here and there, were all that met his gaze.

"Ay, ay, now," he muttered. "She is lost. Perhaps, though, she has not been killed—has been taken prisoner."

Three of the men stopped pulling.

"What's that for?" inquired the captain.

"Well, sir, we don't want to be scalped," said one of the three.

"Pull ahead!" ordered the skipper, sternly.

"You know I am looking for my niece. You should be willing to run some risk for her sake."

The men reluctantly obeyed.

"I will go ashore myself and look about a little if you are afraid," said Captain Williams as the boat's bow grated against a rock.

Scarcely had he spoken when several rifles cracked, and with the whizzing of the bullets was heard that of arrows. One of the latter grazed the skipper's side and passed clean through the body of the bow oarsman. In a moment the rocks were alive with whooping, yelling savages running toward the boat.

Williams whirled it around.

"Pull, men, pull for your lives!" he shouted.

The oars were worked in the water, but, to the consternation of the crew, the vessel did not budge.

The captain soon knew why. Almost under the bottom, nearly hidden by the shadows of protruding rocks, he beheld two dusky Indians holding on to the keel.

There was no time to lose. Pulling a revolver from his belt he fired at each of the savages. The water was discolored with their blood, and the boat shot ahead. Arrows and bullets, discharged by the savages from the shore, made wild music about the vessel. Another man fell into the sea killed, and a third was slightly wounded ere the boat was screened by the fog from the gaze of the foe.

Soon after the captain reached the schooner.

"Where is Rose?" said Lefferts.

"The Lord only knows! I fear those devils ashore have killed the girl."

"This all comes of your not taking my advice," said the mate.

"After all Rose may have only been taken prisoner. That hunter, Josh, is the man to help us. Where is he?"

Lefferts turned aside his head.

"Why, blast you, man, you haven't killed him?"

"No, I let him go adrift in his canoe. He was light-headed from the blow he got and made so much disturbance that I thought it best to let him off."

"Lefferts, you're a rascal—a scoundrel!" cried Williams, angrily, "to do that. Why, man, didn't you know the canoe leaks badly?"

"I knew it very well," replied Lefferts, coolly. "It was his own wish to go. Ask the men. He was so strong that I doubt if any of us, or all together, could have hindered him."

CHAPTER IV.

A "HOME-MADE" SKIFF.

THROUGH the crevices in the rocks piled against the hollow George had watched the men aboard the schooner, until the fog, again thickening, as shown, hid them from his gaze.

Meanwhile not the slightest sound outside indicated the vicinity of savages. That they were near, however, George did not doubt. He feared that when night came they would somehow find an opportunity, favored by the darkness, to pounce upon him.

Back of the hollow there were piles of rocks through which the boy had noticed that a little light entered from above. He now resolved to try to displace some of the masses and look if there was not some means of leaving the place in that direction.

Seeing him vainly tugging at one of the heavy bowlders, Rose came to his assistance. Slight as was her strength, it enabled the youth to roll the mass away. The two then saw an opening large enough for them to squeeze through, leading upward along a rugged wall, which would afford them good footing. They climbed it, and finally George, who was ahead, emerged into the open air, upon a platform of rock, about ten feet above the ground.

Rose, when he helped her out, would have uttered a cry of joy, had he not held up his hand as a sign to her to remain silent.

"The rascals may be near enough," he whispered, "to hear the least noise."

As he spoke he scanned the country in front of him.

The platform fronting south afforded him a view of a thicket of high hills, about a mile off. Between these and his position the land was interspersed with rocks, clumps of shrubbery and groves of trees.

The boy having debated whether he should now attempt to reach the thicket unobserved by his foes, or should wait until night, concluded to start at once.

He sprang to the ground and turned to assist Rose, but, with a nimble jump, she landed at his side.

Bidding her follow him, and holding his rifle ready for service, he hurried along toward the first clump of shrubbery. Could he reach this without being seen by the foe, the rest of the journey would be more easy, as there was a sort of hollow in the ground all the way to the thicket, bordered with long grass and bushes, which would help to conceal the two.

He had nearly gained the clump of brushwood, when, all at once, a startling whoop rung behind him, as a lurking savage peered around the angle of the rock and discovered him.

In a moment rifles rung, arrows whizzed, and Indians were in pursuit.

Rose uttered several shrieks of dismay, and it was these that had been heard aboard the schooner.

"Don't be afraid," said George. "The rascals

are poor shots with the rifle—especially these fishing tribes."

He drew her behind a rock which served him as a sort of breastwork and took aim at the foremost savage.

He was a dead shot; his bullet entered the Indian's left eye, and the man tumbled backward.

The other savages were now more wary in their advance, skulking behind rocks and mounds of earth as they came on.

Again and again George loaded and fired, but he did not kill any more of the Indians, owing to their keeping their bodies protected, although he wounded several in the arms and shoulders.

By this time the mist, which had been gradually thickening on the land as well as on the water, became so dense that neither the Indians nor the two whites could see each other.

As this might give his enemies a chance to steal around on his flank, George resolved to again make an attempt to reach the thicket.

He succeeded, and finally he and his fair companion paused to rest on the side of one of the hills that towered among the trees.

"We are safe for the present," said Rose, "but I fear I will never see uncle again."

"Why?"

"His vessel will be attacked and captured by the savages."

"I think not. If Josh has warned him, he can keep away from them."

"You do not know my uncle. He will not leave this coast until he finds me or hears about me."

George reflected.

"I will do my best for you," he said. "Perhaps we may contrive to get aboard in some way."

"We will need a boat."

"Yes, a conveyance of some kind," said George, smiling.

"Where will we get it?"

"Come with me," said the boy, "and I will show you."

They walked a short distance, which took them into a dell among some willows. With his knife George cut down a great number of small branches. In the course of a couple of hours he had woven these into the form of a skiff.

Rose pressed her hands together in childish glee.

"Will it bear us?" she inquired. "Will it not leak?"

"It will do well enough in moderate weather like this."

"Probably the weather will remain good long enough for us to get aboard the schooner."

"It may," said George a little doubtfully, as he held up his hand and felt a slight breeze blowing from the northwest.

"Shall we start now?"

"Yes; but we must go slowly, as I will have to move ahead of you now and then, and look to see if there are Indians about."

As he spoke he shouldered the skiff, which was very light, and moved toward the coast.

Rose kept by his side except at intervals.

when he left her and went forward a little to reconnoiter.

The mist was still very thick. George could neither see nor hear Indians, and finally, to the girl's joy, he reached the coast.

"How will you know which way to go to look for the schooner?" she said, as the two floated off in the skiff.

"I shall have to hunt for her in such a fog," he answered. "It will be slow work, for, as you see, I have to use my hands for paddles."

They had been about half an hour on the water, when George fancied he heard a noise like the dropping of a hammer, or something of that sort on a vessel's deck.

"I think we are near your craft," he said. "It may be safe enough to sing out, now. Schooner ahoy!" he added, shouting through his hollowed hands.

There was no response. He hailed several times without success.

Meanwhile the breeze had freshened, and the sea was becoming rough. Now and then the water flew over the side of the skiff.

Rose looked alarmed. George continued paddling about in a useless search for the schooner. The wind was now blowing almost a gale, and the fog was beginning to lift. Suddenly an arrow came whizzing between the youth and his companion. Looking in the direction whence it came, George could dimly make out the forms of a canoe and its occupant. These approaching, soon were near enough for the others to see that the canoe contained an Indian youth who, throwing down his paddle, fitted an arrow to his bow, and aimed it at the white boy. Evidently it was this young savage who had discharged the previous arrow.

Before he could send the intended shaft, George, who had quickly unslung his rifle and taken aim, pulled trigger.

On land he was a good shot, but in this leaky skiff, tossing on the seas, his bullet missed. Whiz! came the arrow, but the savage missed for the same reason George had done.

The young hunter's rifle, wetted by the spray, was unfit for further service. He perceived that the Indian had no more arrows in his quiver, and he now resolved to make an effort to get possession of the canoe of this enemy.

It was high time he and Rose had a better boat. The rough seas had made havoc with the slender willow skiff, which must swamp in a few minutes.

Working rapidly with his hands, George approached the Indian, who, perceiving his intention, unslung a tomahawk from his belt, and stood ready for combat.

"Never mind," said Rose, much alarmed. "Can we not get back to shore in this boat?"

"No; the shore is at least a mile and a half distant. That Indian's canoe will make us a good tight boat!"

The youthful savage did not wait for him to come nearer. His tomahawk whistled through the air, and, had not the boy dodged, it would have brained him.

Rose uttered a cry of alarm as George now sprung from the willow skiff directly into the canoe.

The Indian had his knife, and the hunter's good blade was also drawn.

The two struck at each other. The Indian missed, owing to the rolling of the canoe, his knife grazing his opponent's ribs. In an instant, before the savage could again strike, George would have plunged his long blade into his heart, had not his foe, in endeavoring to dodge it, stumbled and fallen backward, headlong into the sea.

He watched for him to come up, but, to his surprise, he did not reappear!

"What can this mean?" he cried. "These coast Indians are good swimmers!"

"See!" cried Rose, pointing toward the mist.

Looking that way George saw another canoe, containing two savages, shooting toward him.

One of them held a bow from which he had just sent forth an arrow.

The arrow had been aimed at the white boy, but it had passed through the body of his opponent as he tumbled into the sea.

The youth now saw the form of the young Indian as it rose nearly to the surface between him and his foes.

CHAPTER V.

A SURPRISE.

To grasp a paddle, to propel the canoe alongside of the sinking willow skiff, to take Rose aboard, and then keep on, was with George the work of a few moments.

Meanwhile the barbed shafts of the savages cut the air about the heads of the fugitives, and it was only the disturbing of their pursuers' aim by the rolling seas which saved them from being struck.

As there were two men in the canoe, it gained fast.

"They will catch up to us! We shall be captured!" cried Rose in alarm.

In fact, so certain now were the Indians of taking the two whites prisoners, that not another arrow was at present discharged.

When they were within a few yards of him, he sprang up, resolved to make as good a fight as possible.

"Stan' still—you!" cried one of the Indians. "If try fight—scalp quick! If not fight, take pris'ner!"

"Put up your knife, for heaven's sake!" pleaded Rose. "That will only exasperate them, and cause them to murder us!"

"They are bent on killing *anyway*," answered George. "What they said was only a trick so they could do their work easily."

At that critical moment, while George stood grasping his knife firmly, and Rose cowered behind him—both expecting speedy death, the ring of a rifle from some quarter ahead of them pealed forth, and a bullet passed through the head of one of the savages, who fell backward over the stern of the canoe.

The other savage, spitefully fixing an arrow to his bow, aimed it at the heart of the young hunter, when the latter let fly at him his long knife, hurled with the skill of a western hunter.

The blade whirling as it flew, struck the Indian in the breast, but did not penetrate deeply

enough to inflict a mortal wound, although it had the effect of disturbing his aim so that his arrow merely grazed the ribs of the youth at whom it was aimed. Before the fellow could use another, the ring of the rifle was again heard and the Indian staggered.

He sat down and commenced to ply his paddle, heading his canoe away from the boy, who knew by his manner that he was badly wounded.

His light craft soon vanished in the mist at the same moment the tall form of Josh Jones loomed through the fog ahead.

"Hello, George. Why, good gracious! it are a comfort to me to meet you in this way and to be of sarvice to yer."

He directed his canoe alongside of the boy's and the two shook hands.

"It sartintly war as lucky fur me as fur you to meet you in this way," continued Jones, pointing to his canoe, which was leaking badly.

"How came you here? Could you not find the schooner?" inquired George.

"I found it, but thar's no tellin' whar it is now. I had a diffikilty with the first-mate—a young chap named Lefferts. A block fell while I war closin' with him, and arter that I knowed nothin' till I comed to. I reckon I must 'a' been lightheaded," he added, thoughtfully, "and that I insisted to leave the schooner in the canoe. The men war opposed to it, but that Lefferts said I should be let to have my way. Somehow, arter I'd floated about awhile in the canoe, my head got clear ag'in. I drifted about and heer I comed jest in time to help you. I dimly see'd through the mist the varmints who were chasin' you and so I blazed away at 'em."

"You have done us a great service," said Rose, "but I think it was cruel of Lefferts to allow you to go in the canoe before you had got over the effects of the blow you received."

"I reckon that chap has Injun blood in him," remarked Josh. "I should take him fur a half-breed."

"You are right," said Rose. "He is a half-breed, but he has long been a sailor among white men."

George now described his adventures since parting from his hunter-friend.

"You've had it mou'ty hard, thar's a fact," said Josh; "wish I'd been with yer, when you had the skrimmage."

"I wish you had. Now, then, about the schooner. You have no idea where she lies?"

"No. This fog are enough to puzzle a weasel."

"It will soon blow away, that's one comfort," remarked George. "We are going to have a gale, and a bad one, too, for the schooner. The wind is landward, if I do not mistake the direction of the shore."

"If we can't find the schooner, we'll hev to go ashore," said Josh.

"Yes; but I'm not sure which way the land lies. Night is coming on and I'd like to put this young lady aboard the schooner if I could, before dark."

He now drew the leaky canoe Josh had occupied alongside the other and with some ropes he found there he lashed the two together. This

would enable them the better to withstand the gale which was coming.

Josh assisted George with the paddles. They worked the canoes about, vainly looking for the Canton.

As darkness closed around them the wind blew a gale. The sea was very rough, and the frail canoes were tossed wildly about, the water breaking over them and drenching the trio to the skin. Suddenly Rose pointed through the gloom far to windward.

"There is a light!" she cried. "It is a green one, and it must be the schooner's, as I know she has a green light."

"Yes, there it is, about two miles off. We never could reach it against the sea which is now running," said George.

"We will hev to go ashore, then," cried Josh.

"Yes, there is no help for it," responded the boy.

Through the darkness the land now was visible not half a mile ahead.

The vessels were headed for it, toward which, in fact, they had been drifting.

George perceived that it was high and rocky. He contrived, however, to get the canoes into a small sheltered bay where they would not be injured by contact with the rocks.

He then found a hollow in a rocky projection where Rose could pass the night.

Anxious and uncomfortable as she was, the young girl made no complaint.

Some yards off George lay down and tried to sleep while Josh kept watch.

At about midnight the boy awoke. He then perceived that there was a change of wind, which was now blowing seaward.

"Where are you, Josh?" he said, rising.

"Hyar," answered Josh, who stood on a rocky elevation.

"Do you still see the light?"

"Yes, I kin see it, jest whar it was afore."

"That is strange," said the boy. "There it is, sure enough, in exactly the same place, so far as I can judge."

"Do you see the schooner's light?" came the soft voice of Rose, who stood wide awake near the two, her eyes shining through the gloom.

"Yes, and as there is a change of wind, I think we had better go out to the craft and put you aboard."

The canoe was soon ready, and the three set out.

As they drew near the light, and George saw the outlines of the vessel's masts, he hailed her.

"Aboy!" was the answer.

"That's not uncle's voice!" said Rose, anxiously.

"Back your head yards. We are coming aboard with your niece!" shouted George.

"Who speaks? Is Rose with you?"

"Yes, I am here!" cried the girl.

"Thank God! and yet it's a sorry craft to take you aboard of now. We are fast on some sunken rocks!"

The canoe was soon near enough for its occupants to see something of the situation of the schooner. She had run through an opening in a circular mass of rocks and was caught in the cleft of one in the center near the surface, where she lay as if wedged in the stocks. Her bow

was depressed almost to the gunwale, while her stern was elevated high in air. Her foretopmast had gone by the board, and lay with some of the rigging caught on a projection of rock.

George soon had the canoe alongside the rock. Lanterns were brought and held out by those aboard the wreck to give light.

"Where is uncle? Why don't he come?" said Rose, looking up at Lefferts, who stood in the gangway, ready to assist her to the deck.

"I am sorry to say," began Lefferts, "that your—your uncle is dead!"

"Dead?" gasped the young girl.

"Yes; he was killed by the falling of the foretopmast, which struck him on the head!"

CHAPTER VI.

AN UNWELCOME DISCOVERY.

The young girl, followed by her companions, was soon on deck.

The body of the dead captain had been taken down into the cabin. The head and face were badly bruised.

Rose gave way to her grief. She had been brought up by her uncle from childhood, and she felt his loss keenly, for he had always treated her as well as if she were his own child.

Meanwhile Lefferts looked askance at George, who was also in the cabin with Josh.

"It are a sad case for the gal," said the hunter.

"Sad enough," said George, and he did his utmost to console Rose.

His words were not without their effect. The manly sympathy expressed by the boy, seemed very grateful to the sorrowing girl. She dried her eyes, and was apparently somewhat comforted.

Lefferts did not like this, at all.

"I suppose you want to go ashore, now?" he bluntly remarked to the youth.

"I am in no hurry," replied the latter quickly.

"No; well, you must understand that I am captain of this craft now, and that I want you to go ashore, at once."

"Seems to me you are in a mou'ty hurry," spoke up Josh.

"All you landsmen are in the way," said Lefferts.

"Waal, now, I reckon yer'll find this lad will be o' use to yer, as he's bobbed about the lakes for some years!"

"I need no assistance," replied Lefferts, dryly. "The sooner the boy goes away from here, the better I shall like it."

The bright eyes of Rose flashed through her tears.

"You should remember if you are the captain of this vessel, that I also have something to say, as the niece of the—the—one who is gone! It is my wish that the boy and his friend here, both of whom have done me a great service—have in fact saved my life, should remain aboard as long as they desire to."

"Let it be as you wish, then," replied Lefferts, sullenly.

"How did you come to get on the rocks?" inquired George of the second officer, who stood near.

"It was the fog; we couldn't see six fathoms

ahead of us. To keep from a lee shore as far as we could, we tacked and stood out. The first thing we knew, we ran on these rocks. The craft has bilged only a little."

"I should hev thought the gale would hev knocked her to pieces," remarked Josh.

"And so it would, hadn't she been jammed between the two rocks, which hold her tight. She's high enough out of water to keep clear of the seas."

"Have you arms aboard?" inquired George.

"We have a few muskets in the cabin and a small carronade forward."

"What is it to you what we have or have not?" said Lefferts, turning to George.

"It is a 'good deal' to the Indians, you will find," answered the boy. "Taking advantage of the vessel's situation, they will be pretty sure to attack you."

"We can look out for ourselves, without any assistance from you," said Lefferts.

"I should be grateful to both these hunters for remaining aboard to help us," said Rose.

"Very well, if you say so," remarked the new captain, frowning. "This vessel belonged to your uncle, and probably you own it, now, so I have nothing more to say."

Rose retired to her room to obtain rest, first having directed that George and Josh Jones should have sleeping-quarters in an apartment opening from the main cabin. Josh went in there, and lay down, but his young comrade repaired to the deck. Lefferts came up, soon after, and ordered the lantern in the rigging extinguished.

"Keep a sharp lookout, there," he said to a couple of sailors, whom he had posted on watch in the bow.

"Ay, ay, sir," was the reply.

"Look sharp for Indians, as I told you before," added the captain.

The men said they would and Lefferts again went below.

George leaned over the rail and peered through the gloom. He fancied he saw dim outlines on the water and he wondered that the lookouts did not also perceive them. He pointed out the figures to the men.

One of the men laughed.

"Them's only mist-clouds," he said. "Where are your eyes, youngster?"

"I think they are Indians, coming this way in their canoes!" said George. "You had better sing out to your captain."

"What—for them shadows?" cried the man.

And again he laughed.

"I still think they are Indians."

"Ho! ho! do Indians disappear that way?"

As he spoke, the sailor pointed toward the spot where what had been seen had now vanished. It was very dark and slightly misty. George thought he might have been mistaken.

When for a whole hour, he had vainly watched for the reappearance of the forms, he was keeping a good lookout. The light of coming dawn must soon steal through the fog which had again become very thick. It was dark on the schooner's deck. George had shifted his position a little nearer to the gangway and was trying to peer through the gloom on the water.

when he felt a hand on his shoulder followed by the usual "Ugh!" of an Indian.

He turned quickly to meet the gleaming eyes of a savage, close to his face, and to see the outline of the fellow's ugly visage.

He started back and brought his rifle down on the palm of his hand.

"No shoot," said the Indian quietly. "Bear-foot come for trade—no want hurt."

"How did you get aboard?"

"Easy. Pale-face sleep. That good for Indian."

As he spoke he pointed to the two men on the bow.

Seated in a reclining position, they appeared to be keeping a lookout, but George knew they could easily sleep in that posture.

Every one of the other eight men composing the schooner's crew, had stolen below to get a nap.

"What criminal carelessness!" thought the boy.

He backed toward the two men on the bow, keeping his face to the savage visitor, for his experience had shown him that with an Indian it was always necessary to guard against treachery.

"Ugh!" grunted Bearfoot, folding his arms, "needn't be 'fraid! Tell come for trade!"

George was soon close to the two lookouts. He put a hand on the shoulder of one to arouse him, when he was startled by the rigidity of the form. He leaned over quickly, looking at both, and in spite of the gloom, he could see that they were dead.

When he now looked for Bearfoot, he noticed that he had disappeared; but the after-part of the craft was filled with the dusky forms of savages.

In an instant all was plain. In the mist and gloom the Indians had contrived, unperceived, to reach the rock on which the schooner had struck.

Some of them had clambered up the bow and killed the two lookouts without noise.

They were now in actual possession of the wreck.

George was at first puzzled to know why the savage Bearfoot had not killed him also, which he could easily have done, as the boy had known nothing of his presence aboard. On second thought, he realized that the wretch had spared him only for the sake of inflicting future torture upon one who had shot down some of his tribe.

His resolution was taken in a moment. Evidently the Indians had but just come aboard, and had not yet ventured below. If he could reach the forecabin, he could arouse the men there, and some sort of a defense might be made.

He quickly sprang into the forecabin. There, by the dim light of a lantern, he beheld a sight which appalled him.

Every one of the eight men composing the crew had been stabbed to death in his sleep, and scalped! All this had been done without noise—in the quick, stealthy manner which an Indian knows so well how to practice when occasion requires.

George felt his heart sink. As the savages

had slain these people, was it not probable that those in the cabin had suffered a similar fate?

His blood was chilled by the thought of Rose having perished in this way. He must, at all events, endeavor to reach the cabin to satisfy himself on this point.

First, he noiselessly pulled and fastened the hatch over the scuttle. Then, taking the lantern that hung up near the bin, he made his way through a bulk-head into the hold.

Looking up as he passed under the hatch, he noticed that he was secured on the inside.

Moving on, he had nearly reached the cabin bulk-head, in which he had previously noticed there was a heavy door, when he perceived that the latter was barred and bolted.

At the same moment he felt a hand upon his arm, and he started back with his rifle ready for firing, when he saw the face of Josh Jones thrust from behind a cask.

"Thank the Lord!" whispered the latter. "You are safe, boy, so far. I war most sartint you had been rubbed out!"

"Where is Rose?"

As he put the question, George saw the young girl close by his side. She had emerged from behind a cask near the one which had hidden Josh.

"Oh! it is dreadful!" she whispered. "The Indians have possession of the craft. What shall we do?"

"Where is Lefferts and the second mate?"

"The second mate are killed, and his ha'r lifted," said Josh. "This is how it happened. I hev told yer more'n once, boy, that I think I kin *smell* an Injun, when I don't heer him. Waal, I war asleep, and the smell must hev waked me, fur when I opened my eyes, thar war four of the varmints stealin' toward the second mate's room. Pooty soon I heerd a half-smothered groan, and the scrapin' of lifted ha'r. I had jumped up and made fur the door of Rose's room the fust thing. Jest as I got thar, she opened it herself."

"Yes," said Rose. "I could not sleep, and I thought I would go up on deck for some fresh air."

"I held up my hand," continued Josh, "as a sign fur her to make no noise. Then I tuck her hand, and bid her go with me. I bed see'd the door in the bulkhead, and as the Injuns had not yet comed out of the second mate's room, I got in hyar 'thout their seein' me, and barred and bolted the door. They didn't hurt Lefferts—why, I don't know, unless it's 'cause they knowed him as havin' belonged to the Nor'west Company, with which the varmints is friendly. I heerd them ask him whar the gal was—they seemed to know she war aboard hyar, fur some reason, and I heerd him say that he did not know—that she must hev got away from the craft."

"The Indians being friends to him, he may in some way contrive to save all our lives as well as those of the crew," said Rose.

George hesitated whether to inform her of the fate of the crew, and finally concluded it was best to do so.

She shuddered and stood aghast at the fearful recital.

"One thing are sartint," whispered Josh to

the boy, "unless Lefferts kin maneuver to keep them Injuns out of the hold, it are all up with us!"

"I think Lefferts will do his best to save *me*," said Rose. "But, as you have seen, he is a villain at heart, and may further the savages in capturing you. Perhaps it would, after all, have been better for you to leave the schooner as he wished. My interference, I fear, has drawn you into great peril, and may be the means of your death," she added, sadly.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEFENSE.

ABOUT an hour after George encountered Rose and Josh in the hold, the trio heard the savages pounding at the fore-castle scuttle, also at the hatch which, as stated, the youth had fastened on the inside.

By this time the two hunters had put up a sort of barricade of ropes, casks and bags of oakum.

"We kin keep the varmints back fur awhile, at any rate," said Josh. "It's a comfort to know that we'll kill a few 'fore they git at our ha'r!"

The yells of the savages and the noise of their pounding frightened the young girl, who trembled from head to foot.

Mingled with the din was heard a shrieking, whistling, unearthly noise, seeming to come from a distance.

"What on 'arth is that?" inquired Josh. "A feller would think we war goin' to hev imps of the 'farnal regions to deal with as well as these coast niggers."

"What you hear is the noise of a coming gale. I knew we should have another before long," answered George.

Just then the Indians at the hatch succeeded in beating it to pieces, and a dozen savage forms sprung into the hold.

They ran about hither and thither, searching for the hidden occupants of the craft, and at the same time picking up and examining the many articles which Captain Williams had brought for trade with them, and which he had stowed between decks.

It was not long ere their attention was caught by the barricade erected by Josh and George, in the after part of the hold.

They darted toward it, whooping as they came, but the next moment the rifles of the hunters, projecting over the rude rampart, sent forth their deadly contents, and two of the savages fell.

"Quick! Scalp Wizard Rifle!" cried Bear-foot fiercely.

The Indians, with tomahawks uplifted, scrambled across casks, ropes and canvas, toward the barricade.

In a few seconds they must have sprung over it but for an unexpected occurrence.

The gale, a terrific one—much more severe than that of the previous night—pouncing upon the wreck, sent huge walls of water sweeping over the weather-rail.

These poured in a perfect torrent through the open hatchway, washing the Indians from their

feet and hurling them upon each other in a promiscuous heap.

The barricade thus far saved the persons behind it from a like fate, but as the torrent kept pouring in, they realized that it must soon reach them too.

The noise of the seas striking against the schooner was like that of many battering-rams, and she reeled and shook from stem to stern.

Suddenly there was a grinding, scraping noise, the craft was lifted as if by the back of a giant, nearly clear of the rocky crevices between which she was wedged, and then down she went almost upon her beam-ends, thumping and beating with terrific force against the rugged masses.

The overthrown savages had scrambled to their feet, and half-blinded and half-drowned they contrived to get back through the hatchway, into which, from the vessel's change of position, the water did not now descend so fast as it had previously done.

It seemed as if the wreck must soon go to pieces. It had already bilged, and the leak being a serious one, the water came rapidly in through her bottom.

"Ef we don't git out of this, it seems to me we'll be drowned like rats," remarked Josh.

"There is danger here," said George, "and I'm pretty sure we'll find no Indians on deck now. They've made off to save themselves."

He groped his way to the hatch and, looking out, perceived that the savages were gone.

Rose seemed overjoyed when he reported that such was the case, but George looked serious.

"We are out of one peril," he said, "but we have got into another. If the gale holds as it is, the schooner will go to pieces in a few minutes."

"Is there no way we kin leave the craft?" inquired Josh.

"That remains to be seen. I noticed a good boat aboard. If it is there still, we may contrive to get off; but whether we succeed in reaching land or not in such a blow—"

A terrific, deafening crash interrupted him.

"It is the mainmast," he said, in response to Rose's inquiring look. "Come, let us go up and see what can be done."

Picking up one of the many hatchets which had been brought for barter with the Indians, and which he thought might now prove useful, George having unfastened the cabin-door in the bulkhead, led the way.

The cabin was dryer than any other part of the wreck, but the seas and the spray now and then poured into it. The trio soon gained the deck. George looked around him, to discover that the schooner had settled down between masses of rock, over which the angry waters were bubbling, boiling and flying high, now and then sweeping the deck forward. The gale was raging with great fury, but to windward the boy saw a lighted space, which appeared to indicate that it would pass off to leeward before long.

Whether this would happen before the craft went to pieces was rather doubtful.

"Waal, boy, what do yer think?" inquired Josh.

"The boat is gone," said George. "It has been swept away. It does not much matter, for we could not have got it to land in the sea now running."

"Them varmints kin do it," said Josh, pointing to the Indians, who, in their canoes, two lashed together, were riding the surges toward the shore.

"These coast savages are very skillful," answered George. "Had I several men to help me, I too might get to land with a boat."

"Waal, so we've got to stay hyar?"

"Ay, there's no help for it."

As he spoke, George passed some turns of rope about the waist of Rose, and lashed her to the rail, to keep her from being washed away.

Anxiously the three stood listening to the crashing of the schooner against the rocks, expecting every moment that she would part.

George kept his gaze on the cleared spot to windward. This grew larger, indicating that the storm was sweeping rapidly off to leeward.

Gradually the violence of the wind and the seas abated. The clear sky was now over the heads of the three.

"We are safe!" cried Rose, gladly.

"Safe from that storm, yes," said Josh. "But of course the niggers will soon pay us another visit."

Hardly had he spoken when the schooner, sliding down a ledge of rock on which she was balanced, settled into a sort of basin between the rugged masses and began to sink.

"We are going—we are lost!" cried Rose.

Lower and lower sunk the wreck.

"We'll soon hev to swim fur it," said Josh. "Thar's rocks we mou't reach and stay on until the Injuns come to take our ha'r!"

"Wait a moment," said George, who was peering over the side of the craft into the water.

He had noticed that this looked dark, perhaps indicating a shallow bottom.

The water-logged wreck settled still lower—the sea was now almost up to the first line of her bulwarks.

When she had gone down about half a foot lower, a slight shock was felt.

"There you are!" cried George. "She has struck bottom. She'll sink no further, unless another gale comes up and turns her over."

Josh gave a grunt of satisfaction as he looked around him.

The position of the dismantled wreck was such that she could not now have been seen from the shore, owing to her being nearly surrounded by the rocks projecting from the sea—some of which rose to the height of ten feet. As she had lost both masts, these elevations would hide the little of her deck that remained above water.

"Now," said Josh, "havin' had no breakfast, I'm as hungry as a b'ar, and think we mou't as well fodder."

He took some venison from his wallet, and George having succeeded in fishing up a bread-barge—a box containing sea-biscuits—from the fore-castle, the three made a tolerable breakfast, after which the two hunters held a consultation.

They resolved to construct a raft, and en-

deavor on this to reach the shore at night, thinking the darkness would then conceal them from the Indians.

"But suppose they should conclude to come off to make sure the wreck is sunk?" said Rose.

"In that case, we'd hev to try to hide ourselves," said Josh.

"Yes, we should have to do that, and they would think we had been drowned in the hold," added George.

He looked into the cabin. It was half-full of water, but two of the berths there were yet above the surface. By placing a plank, with the further end resting on the edge of one of these, and the other on a step of the companion stairs, the three could reach the berths.

A long board which could be used for this purpose, was found amidships and laid near the cabin.

Then, with the assistance of Josh, the youth fished some spare spars out of the hold in which they were floating, and proceeded to fashion a rude raft, by tying the timber together with ropes.

This raft, with pieces of board which would serve for paddles, lashed to it, was launched alongside. In order that, should the savages come to the wreck, they might not see the raft, a small anchor was attached to it, and it was sunk out of sight beneath the surface—a rope having been previously secured to the anchor so that it could be hauled up.

To watch for the savages, Josh now got on one of the rocks, which, as stated, nearly surrounded the wreck. The rock occupied by the hunter was within half a foot of the end of the flying-jibboom, and contained a ledge, from behind which he could keep a lookout without being seen from the land.

He had not been there an hour when his voice was heard:

"Cuss the mean varmints—hyar they come—a hull kit on 'em—not less nor thirty!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A PERILOUS WRECK.

JOSH, after he had spoken, clambered back by the boom to the deck.

He assisted George to place the plank for reaching the berths in the cabin, and first removing from the deck all signs of their having been there, the three got into the berths, Rose taking one and Josh and George the other. The plank was then pulled away, and allowed to float about the flooded apartment. The berths were provided with curtains, which were now closely drawn by the occupants, who soon after heard the Indians board the wreck.

These people ran hither and thither, peering into the cabin, the hold, and the fore-castle, and uttering dissatisfied grunts, because the expected plunder was covered by the water.

Now and then the trio in the berths could hear them making efforts to bring up articles by diving, but evidently their efforts were not successful.

They now commenced to break up some of the woodwork of the cabin, and they could be heard putting fragments of timber, ropes, and pieces of iron in their canoes.

It was dark before they left the wreck.

"I'll go and see ef they're all gone," said Josh.

George thrust out his hand and felt about the water for the floating plank, by means of which they had reached the berths.

It was too dark for him to see the piece of timber.

"Never mind," said Josh. "I kin swim it."

Keeping his rifle lashed on his back so that it would not come in contact with the water, he struck out.

Scarcely had he done so when there was a broad glare of light, with which was blended a crackling noise.

"Hillo! the skunks has set fire to the wreck!" said Josh, as he gained the companion stairs.

He peered through the companionway, to discover that the deck was deserted.

Fore and aft it was strewn with fragments of tarred ropes and canvas, which the savages had fired.

The Indians were all out of sight, but Josh believed they were not far off on the other side of the rocks, watching for the flames to shoot up.

"Thar's light enough now, boy, for yer to see the floating plank," continued Josh. "Better work sharp, as the fire is spreading fast. I'll go and try to git up the raft anchor."

Bidding Rose not to be alarmed, George, leaning over the side of the berth he occupied, succeeded in drawing the plank toward him.

He raised it, placing it in the position it was before.

As he did so, he was dismayed to see the gleam of the flames close to the companionway.

He assisted Rose across the plank.

At the same moment he fancied he heard a splash and a gurgling cry, like that of some person striving to call for help.

As he endeavored to rush with Rose through the companionway, a mass of flames shooting in through the opening, drove him back.

"God help us! We are lost!" cried the young girl.

The heat was almost unbearable, and, staggering back, she would have fallen had not George supported her with an arm about her waist.

With his disengaged hand he loosened the hatchet he had brought from the hold, and which was now slung to his belt.

One wrench with the blade was sufficient to pry open a sash fixed in one side of the woodwork. The boy was then able to lift the girl so that she could get through the aperture to the deck.

George quickly joined her. The fire had not yet quite reached this part of the vessel, but it was fast sweeping toward it.

He drew Rose aft to the stern and looked over.

He could see nothing of the raft nor of Josh.

"There it is—the raft!" said Rose, pointing to the floating platform, which had drifted alongside one of the rocks, about ten yards off.

A look of deep distress fell upon the boy's face.

"Josh is lost!" he groaned.

"Lost?"

"Yes; I now know the meaning of that gurgling cry I heard. It was he. In reaching over to cut the rope, after hauling up the anchor, the heavy weight must have slipped from his hold, and a bight of the rope catching about him, drew him down to the bottom."

The fate of his friend, to whom he was much attached, was a heavy blow to George, but the present was no time to think of it. He must use every effort to save the poor girl, of whom he was now left the sole protector.

The roar of the advancing flames sounded close behind him, showers of sparks enveloped the two, and the heat was oppressive.

The only way to reach the raft was by swimming to it.

The boy helped his companion upon the rail, and leaving his rifle in her possession, bade her stand there until he should return with the floating support.

George swam to the raft and soon paddled it to the wreck.

He helped the girl upon it not a moment too soon, for the flames were almost under the rail on which she had stood.

The youth directed the raft alongside the rock from which he had brought it and there remained watching the burning wreck.

"Why don't you pass through one of the openings in the rocks and make for the shore?" inquired Rose.

"Because the Indians would see us by the bright light of the fire."

"But is it not dangerous to stay here? There is powder in the cabin; I am afraid the wreck will blow up."

"No; the powder is under water. The flames could not reach it."

For about an hour all that part of the wreck above the surface continued to burn.

As soon as the fire was out, George commenced to paddle the raft. He got it through the opening between the rocks and then directed it shoreward, trying to head it toward that part of the land furthest from the spot whence he supposed the savages had come.

The night was very dark and a slight mist added to the gloom.

With the pieces of board he used for paddles the boy made scarcely any noise.

At last, after toiling for several hours, he brought the raft against a projecting point of land.

It did not take him long to cut the ropes lashed about the pieces of timber, which were thus set adrift.

"The Indians must not see the raft, which would give them an idea of what it was used for," he said. "As it is, when the tide turns the timbers will drift back toward the rocks we have left."

"And what are we to do now?" said Rose.

"We must get away from the coast. In the morning we must try start for Fort Okanagan, from which place you can safely reach Oregon City."

When they had walked about three miles from the coast, George, knowing that his fair companion was much fatigued, paused among the rugged masses of a spur of the Cascade

Mountains. Dark as it was, he found a sheltered spot—a deep alcove in a rock—where the girl could pass the night. As the weather was warm, he made her a comfortable couch with some branches, which had been blown down from the trees by the recent gales. Over the branches he spread his rubber blanket.

He then walked a few yards from the spot, and, with his rifle in the hollow of his arm, kept a lookout.

The morning which at last dawned upon these rugged hills was bright and clear.

Mounting a rock, George looked about him, keeping himself partly hidden by a projecting boulder.

He then beheld a large body of Indians approaching the mountain from the direction of the coast. They were evidently following the trail, which he and the girl had left in the sand and grass, on the previous night.

"I expected this," he muttered. "There was no help for it, but I did not think it would happen so soon. The current must have deceived me. I could not have landed so far up the coast as I thought I did."

Among the Indians he saw Lefferts, who seemed fully as eager as his companions in following up the trail.

George now hurried toward the place where he had left Rose.

She was up, had washed her face and hands in a spring, and, with a little comb she carried in her pocket, had smoothed her hair.

The sleep she had obtained had restored the bloom to her cheeks, and, in spite of her late hardships, she appeared, in the boy's estimation, as lovely as a wood-nymph.

"I suppose we can continue our journey, now," she remarked. "I feel very strong."

"Not yet. The Indians are coming, and they could see us."

"Indians?"

"Yes; they have struck our trail."

"Oh, what shall we do?"

"We must conceal ourselves until they are gone."

"But where can we hide?"

"I know a good place," said George, who was familiar with this part of the mountains, where he had once hunted and trapped with Josh.

He led the way through a narrow gorge to the mouth of a long deep cavern. It was dark and damp, but it seemed to offer a secure retreat, for there was a boulder near the entrance, which he shoved over the opening after he and the girl were in.

As their shoes had left no tracks on the hard rock, George did not think the savages would trace them to this place.

The two crouching in the cave, heard the Indians as they moved to and fro among the rocks, vainly searching for them.

"Ugh! don't think here. Think go further on!" said one of them.

"No," came the voice of Lefferts, in response.

"I think they must be somewhere among these rocks, as the trail is not on the other side of the mountain."

"Easy hide trail. Get canoe, perhaps, and go down stream," said the savage, alluding to a

small stream, a branch of the Okanagan, which flowed at the base of the elevation.

"It might be so, but I doubt it," said Lefferts. "We had better hang about these rocks if we want to find them."

CHAPTER IX.

AN UNWELCOME VISITOR.

LEFFERTS and the savages passed on. Rose trembled, and George could see her eyes shining with terror in the gloom.

"Don't be afraid," he whispered. "The rascals will get tired of being here. Fortunately, I still have food in my wallet."

In spite of her fears, Rose, who had fasted long, had a good appetite, and the two made a satisfactory meal.

George, who had not slept any on the previous night, now took a nap in a sitting posture with his head resting against the wall of the cave and his arms folded. Trained to the hardships of a hunter's life, the youth slumbered soundly in this position.

He did not awaken until hours later.

"Have you heard the Indians since I fell asleep?" he inquired of Rose.

"No, but I saw them, and I think they have gone. I caught sight of them following the course of the stream."

"Was Lefferts with them?"

"Yes."

George thought it best to remain in the retreat until toward night. Late in the afternoon they partook of a frugal repast, and then the boy cautiously ventured from their hiding-place.

He reconnoitered carefully, but he saw no sign of Indians.

The journey was therefore resumed, George taking a route which led him away from the stream toward the main chain of the Cascades, which he would be obliged to cross to reach Fort Okanagan.

At night, to give Rose a rest, he paused in a dell.

"How much further have we to go?" she inquired.

"A good many miles," replied the boy.

Just then both were startled by the crack of a rifle in the distance.

George had seen the flash of the weapon, which was not more than a quarter of a mile off, in the direction of a thicket of willows he had noticed before dark.

"Who could have fired that shot?" inquired Rose—"an Indian?"

"No, I don't think so—at any rate, the Indians who are searching for us would not have fired, fearing it would give us notice of their vicinity. Would you be afraid to stay here until I go and see if I can discover who fired?"

"You will not be gone long, and will be very careful of yourself?"

"I will soon be back, and I will be careful for your sake."

Leaving Rose in a hollow between some rocks, he started forward.

He found the way more difficult than he had expected. There was a swamp to cross and masses of rugged rocks beyond. Inspired by

the hope that he would find some friendly party to assist him, the boy kept on.

The moon arose as he proceeded over the lofty peaks in the distance, and threw a silvery gleam upon the wild landscape.

At last he saw a dark object on the ground ahead of him near the edge of the willow thicket.

He soon reached it, to discover that it was a portion of a deer, which had lately been shot. Whoever had killed it had taken off with him the best part of the animal. On the ground near the slain deer he now noticed something white. He picked it up, and perceived that it was the handle of a long hunting-knife, with a portion of the blade, which had evidently been broken off. He turned the article over and over, inspecting it keenly by the light of the moon.

"No," he muttered, at last. "No other than Josh Jones ever owned a knife, with a handle carved in that way! What can it mean?" Can it be that Josh fired the shot I heard? No—no—for he was drowned—must have been dragged down by the anchor! And yet—here is the knife—the knife which I am sure he had in his belt, when I last saw him aboard the wreck!"

On further reflection, George could only come to the conclusion that the body of the hunter had risen to the surface after he was drowned, and that some Indian had seen it, and had taken the knife from his belt.

This soon proved that it was an Indian who had fired the shot the boy had heard, and who had killed the deer.

Having looked about for some time without seeing any person, George returned to the place where he had left Rose, and which he easily found, owing to the peculiar shape of a rock near it.

He told her about the slain deer and the knife.

"As it was probably an Indian who fired," he added, "it would seem to prove that the savages are close upon us. We had better move further on if you are not too tired."

"I have had a good rest," the girl cheerfully answered.

They traveled some miles further before they halted. Next morning they saw the mountains they would have to cross looming up not fifteen miles off.

George shot a deer and was soon cooking some slices of the meat over the fire, which he had lighted with matches taken from a small waterproof safe, which he always carried with him.

The two made a good breakfast, after which they continued their journey.

By nightfall, having walked slowly and halted now and then so as not to fatigue his companion, George pointed to the mountains, now about half a mile ahead.

"There they are—at last," he said. "Once on the other side of those mountains, you will have nothing to fear, as our Indian enemies dare not venture into the country of the Flat-heads."

"Are they not our enemies, too?"

"They were not at last accounts."

The two finally halted for the night among the mountains.

The weather was clear, and as soon as they had partaken of a supper, prepared from some of the deer's meat, and when Rose had retired to sleep in the hollow of a rock which George, as usual had made ready for her reception, the boy mounted an elevation near, and by the light of the moon, looked keenly about him.

He had deemed it risky work to make the two fires with which he had recently cooked his meals; but he believed that the fatigue and hardships of travel she had undergone, rendered it necessary that Rose should have fresh, strengthening animal food. Besides he had nearly concluded that the savages had given up the pursuit.

Nevertheless he kept a good lookout, scanning the wild country as far as he could see.

Perceiving no sign of his enemies, he finally sat down to take a brief nap, as he had been in the habit of doing throughout each night since leaving the wreck, as this was the only way in which he could fit himself for continuing the journey.

He awoke in a couple of hours, and again looked about him.

A short distance off toward the edge of a thicket, he fancied he could see a group of dark forms approaching; but just as he caught sight of them, he was startled by a scream of terror from Rose.

He hurried to the hollow rock, to see the girl cowering in the further corner of the cave, before an ugly-looking animal of ferocious aspect, not unlike a small bear in appearance, which had crept toward her through the opening of the hollow. The creature had sharp teeth, bright, glaring eyes, very large feet and claws which looked almost white. It was now crouching close to her, about to attack her, and fasten its horrid fangs in her snowy throat, upon which its gaze was fixed.

Great as was her danger, the first thought of George was not to fire, and thus by the noise of his rifle attract the attention of the group he had just seen, and whom he believed to be enemies. In fact, his hand was already on the haft of his knife for close-quarter fighting with the beast, when the urgency of the case showed him that not a moment was to be lost, if he would save the life of the girl.

The wolverine—for such it was—had already raised itself on its hind legs, and lifted its huge paws, one stroke of which, the boy well knew, might inflict a mortal wound.

Therefore, he quickly raised his rifle, and aiming it at the animal's head, sent a bullet through its brain.

With a horrid snarl the brute tumbled, and rolling over on its side, soon died.

"I was so frightened," gasped Rose, as George helped her to her feet. "I had been asleep, dreaming of savages attacking us, when on suddenly awaking, what should I see but this monster, glaring at me with its big, round eyes, as it stole toward me from a cleft in the rock opposite this hollow."

true," said the boy. "I'd about given up the thought of our being followed further by the Indians; but just now, I saw, only a little way off, what I take to be our enemies."

"And you have just fired your rifle, which will show them that you are here!" cried Rose.

"Yes; but there was no help for that. I had to plump a snot into that wolverine, or he would soon have finished you. There was not time for me to plug him with my knife, or I'd have done it."

"That would have been perilous wouldn't it?"

"It might. Sometimes a wolverine—especially when he's cornered, will fight as hard as a bear, and I think he can strike a harder blow than a bear can. But this is no time for me to talk—we can't lose a moment, now."

He took her hand, and led her over rocks and crags, until they had reached a lofty elevation.

By this time she was thoroughly exhausted, and the boy had to stop to give her rest.

Looking round him he could now make out the dark forms of savages climbing the rocks toward the place where he stood.

"They have seen us!" he said.

"Can we not escape?" inquired Rose.

"No, they are coming up all around us. They shall not take me without losing some of their gang!" he added, as he aimed his rifle at the nearest Indian.

Just as he pulled trigger, the fellow dropped, and the bullet went over him.

But the boy had time to load again before his foes reached him.

Now and then an arrow whistled about his ears, but columns of rocks near him were in the way, and the barbed shafts striking these, glanced off.

A second time he fired, and an Indian who had climbed over the edge of a crag, planged, head downward, from the height, as the bullet passed through him.

Before the lad could again load, he was surrounded by half a dozen Indians and made prisoner.

Both he and Rose were led down the mountains, and hurried along for many weary miles, before they were allowed a moment's rest.

At last, bound hand and foot, George was thrust into one of the temporary lodges which the party had now reached, while Rose was taken off to another.

For awhile the boy heard the guttural voices of the savages outside and also the crackling of sticks, which were being brought to the camp.

The lad shuddered, for he well knew the meaning of these sounds.

The funeral pyre was being prepared—he was to be burned at the stake.

Was Rose to be also tortured to death in the same manner?

He feared so, and his spirit chafed at the thought.

The loveliness of the girl had not been without its effect upon the youth. He had felt as if he were ready to go through any hardship and peril for her sake, and more than once the thought had occurred to him that, at some future time, he might ask her to be his wife.

It was terrible to him to think of her suffering the horrid fate that seemed in store for her.

CHAPTER X.

THE PRISONERS.

"YOUR dream, I'm sorry to say, may come

Finally, seeing one of the Indians who were guarding the tent peering into it, he said:

"What will be done with the white girl? Her hand was not raised once against the Indians! Why not let her go?"

"Ugh!" answered the savage, "she die, too. The chief has said it. It must be!"

"Where is the half-breed you had with you? Can I not see him? I know he was with you. I would speak with him."

To this the Indian made no answer; he withdrew, and George did not see him again that night.

It occurred to him that Lefferts, if he was now with the savages, would use his every effort to save Rose from her fate. But he feared that the sailor was not with the party at present, and that they would carry out their horrible intention of burning her to death before he could arrive.

At dawn he was led from the lodge.

He looked in vain for Rose, and even at that dreadful moment his joy was great at not seeing her.

"Where is the white girl?" he inquired of a short, stout Indian, whom he believed to be the chief.

"She go away. Don't know where go."

"You have not killed her?" said George, suspiciously.

"Wishree not say one thing and mean another. His tongue is straight."

"Can you not guess where she has gone to?"

"No. Him, Lefferts, gone too. Was here last night. Tink him take off white girl. Never mind—we shall find. Then kill Lefferts, too. He is a snake."

"Did you not have a guard about the girl's lodge?"

"No; only have guard for *man*—not for squaw."

George was about to speak again, but the chief made a sign with his hand.

"Not too much speak. Me been see plenty pale-face, and all speak too much. Indian not speak too much—he strike."

As he said this the captors and their captive were near some Indians who were cooking their breakfast over a large fire. There were six of the savages about the boy; many others stood about fifty yards off. Accustomed to sitting in their canoes and plying their paddles, most of these people were slightly bowed, and some were bow-legged. Their skin, of a dark coppery hue, now showed the flush of exultation, and their small black eyes shone like beads from under their rugged brows.

George doubted not that he could easily distance them in a race, and when, on slightly moving his arms, he discovered that his bonds were loosely tied, the thought of freeing himself by a vigorous jerk of his wrists flashed on his mind. A slight mist, partly hiding the landscape around him, would aid him to escape, could he once clear himself. On making the attempt, however, he was not successful. With fiendish cruelty the Indians had purposely tied him loosely that they might have the pleasure of seeing him struggle to free himself.

Through the canopy of smoke from the fire near which he stood he could hardly see his

tormentors, who, while awaiting the preparations for his death, were dancing in front of him, flourishing their tomahawks and uttering hideous yells.

At that instant a tall form bounded from a clump of shrubbery behind him, and with two strokes of a clasp-knife severed his cords. The Indians did not see either the rescuer or their intended victim until the smoke, slightly clearing, gave them a view of the heads of the two above the shrubbery as they sped along.

Such a yell as then went up equaled that of a legion of fiends.

The band started in pursuit, and many an arrow whistled about the fugitives.

"Drat the thick-headed varmints!" cried Josh Jones, for he it was who had freed his young friend, "they kin handle the'r paddles better than arrers. A Crow nigger or a Black-foot would 'a' plugged us 'fore now. Then, ag'in, the'r crooked legs and flat feet are 'mazingly to our advantage."

The astonishment of George at the sudden appearance of this hunter, whom he had thought was drowned may be imagined, but he forbore asking any questions at present.

The two kept on for a long distance, leaving their pursuers far behind, nor did they stop to draw breath until Josh, suddenly stooping beneath an overhanging rock, raised a trap of willow wicker-work, on which he had fastened sods and sticks to give it the appearance of solid ground. A hole about seven feet deep was thus disclosed.

"Jump in, boy," said Josh. "Hyar we kin lie off at our ease and puzzle them varmints to find our trail. I made this a-purpose to hev a retreat to go to while huntin' fur you and the gal."

He sprang into the hollow, and having replaced the wicker-trap, he and George sat down side by side.

They remained silent until the Indians had gone past and their voices had receded in the distance. Then lifting the edge of the trap, Josh sprang out and went a short distance to reconnoiter. He soon returned.

"The varmints is puzzled. They are 'bout a mile off with their noses down, tryin' to strike our trail. They'll be comin' back soon, but they'll never diskiver us hyar, unless I'm mou'ty mistook."

CHAPTER XI.

THE FORT.

"AND now, Josh, for Heaven's sake give me some idea of what became of you after you left me and Rose there in the cabin of the wreck. I am not quite sure yet that it is not your ghost I am talking to."

"Ef yer'd seen me eatin' roast deer-meat t'other night you'd hev said this ghost had a long stummick. I sw'ar to gracious! I must hev put down two pounds o' fodder at one lick!"

"Well, Josh, you must have as many lives as a cat. You were dragged under water, were you not?"

"Yes, and now I think of it, it must hev been the salt water that gave me sech a 'farnal

appertite. I'll tell you how it war. Arter leavin' the cabin of the wreck, I hauled on that cussed anker-rope. I'd got the anker most up when, in reachin' over to cut it clear o' the raft, I lost my balance and plumped into the water. A turn of the anker-rope caught about my arm, and when I came up it war only jest so far and no further. The rope wouldn't allow me to rise any higher. The end o' my nose war out, but drat me ef I could git any more up, and I war stranglin'. I got out my knife with my left arm and tried to cut the rope from my arm, but I made botch-work of it and almost broke my knife by jabbin' it in the woodwork o' the wreck. At last I got the rope clear, but by this time I war so confused from bein' so long under water that I didn't know which way I went when I struck out. Waal, I got hold o' one o' the rocks and clombed up on it, when my feelin' so dizzy made me slip and fall. I must hev struck on my head, fur I knowed nothin' more till I came to and found myself doubled up in a hollow 'mong the rocks. It war dark as blazes and I couldn't see nothin' plain. At last I comed to the sense o' my persition, and then, seein' no sign o' the raft, I made up my mind that you and the gal had drifted on it to the shore. How on 'arth I war goin' to git to land I couldn't guess, until I got sight of a big plank alongside one o' the rocks. By puttin' down my nose I could see that the current war runnin' toward the shore; so I made up my mind I'd git on the plank and risk bein' caught by the Injuns while driftin' toward the coast.

"Fortunitly I didn't come across enny o' the varmints, but usin' my hands fur paddles, I got to land 'fore mornin' and at once struck into the kentry, thinkin' you and the gal must be gone that way. Waal, the long and short of it are that I dodged about hyar and thar lookin' fur yer trail, and now and then gittin' sight o' rovin' parties of Injuns, who war also lookin' yer up.

"That war the reason I finally made this trap over the 'arth hollow—that I mou't hev a place to hide in whar Old Nick hisself couldn't hev found me."

"Did you not fire off your rifle last night?"

"Yes—did yer heer it?"

"I did."

George then explained about the deer and his finding the broken knife.

"Yes—in cuttin' the deer I shot, the blade which, as I said, war most broken, snapped off near the handle. Now then, boy, let's heer about yer own exper'ences since we got separated."

The lad told his story in a few words.

"I am concerned about Rose," he said. "There can be no doubt that Lefferts has made off with her and he will do his best to keep her away from us and to prevent her from going to her brother's at Oregon City."

"Yes, I reckon you're right. The mean cuss will bother her out of her life, tryin' to persuade her to marry him. He has bad blood in him, and thar's no tellin' what he mou't do ef she refused him."

"We must do our best to hunt them up and rescue her."

"I'm with you thar. I rather take to that gal and will do all I kin to help you."

Not long after, they heard the Indians repass the place where they were concealed.

As soon as they judged that the baffled savages were out of sight, they emerged from their quarters.

They were passing through a thicket when Josh, leaning over, pointed out to his companion a small, black, shining object lying on a bed of moss, near a tree.

"A berry of some kind, I think," said George, surprised that his friend should call his attention to anything so insignificant.

"Thar's no berry 'bout that," said Josh, picking up the article and putting it in the boy's hand. "It is a bead fallen from the gal's dress!"

"You are right. Then she and Lefferts have passed this way."

"You kin be sure of it. The wind and the mist-rain hev sp'iled ther tracks, in the sod and grass, but this shows which way they went."

The two moved swiftly on.

At length they came to a small creek, not more than two feet wide.

"They must hev crossed this," said Josh, but he looked in vain for tracks in the soft ground bordering the little stream.

He went in one direction to search for the tracks, while George went in another.

The boy had not proceeded far, when, directly ahead of him, he beheld a young Indian about his own age, apparently studying the ground intently.

The savage had his back to him, but George could perceive by his dress that he belonged to the same tribe from which he (George) had lately escaped. He had evidently come upon the track of Lefferts and the girl, and it was upon these he was gazing. The lad also noticed that he held in his right hand a rifle, which he recognized as his own—the one which had been taken from him when he was captured.

"I must have that piece!" thought George.

He was entirely unarmed, and Josh was now hidden from his gaze by the shrubbery behind him, so that he could expect no assistance from him.

Cautiously and swiftly, making no noise with his moccasins on the soft ground, he approached the Indian.

He was within a few feet of him, about to make a spring and snatch the coveted rifle from his hand, when the dusky youth turned and saw him.

"Ugh!" he exclaimed, stepping quickly back upon a mound of earth, and aiming the piece at the boy's head.

"Wachnee got quick eye! No snake creep up to him, and he not see! The white boy's time has come. He must die!"

George could do nothing to save himself. He perceived, now that it was too late, that he had been foolishly rash in trying, unarmed as he was, to get his rifle from his enemy.

The muzzle of the piece was on a line with his forehead, and the Indian was about to pull the trigger when the report of another piece was

heard, and the dusky foe fell dead, as a bullet rattled through his ribs!

"Jest in time, boy," came the voice of "Oregon Josh," as he emerged from the shrubbery, behind his friend. "It war lucky the varmint stood on that 'arth mound, or I could not hev throwed him 'thout hittin' you too!"

"Yes, it was a timely shot," said George. "I thought the fellow had me, sure."

He secured his rifle, and the two now examined the tracks at which the Indian had been gazing, and which were found to be those of Rose and Lefferts, showing that this was the place where they had crossed.

Leaping over the creek, they hurried forward, vainly looking for further traces of those they were in search of.

They kept on for a couple of days longer, when Josh pointed out, far ahead, a tall pole with a flag waving from it.

"Thar you are," he said. "and I'd be willin' to bet a hull bufler, that Lefferts is thar with the gal."

"That must be one of the posts of the Northwest Company," said George.

"Yes, and we'll not git a very warm reception from them coons you kin be sartint."

"I hope at any rate we can persuade them to furnish Rose with transportation to her native town."

"I doubt it. Lefferts, of course, is hand and glove with them chaps and they'll do as he says about it."

As the two approached the post, which consisted of a small earthwork surrounding several neat log buildings, they saw half a dozen men with muskets, headed by another, similarly armed, emerge from a small gate and approach them.

These men halted within a few feet of them. They were all rough, stern-looking fellows, the leader especially, whose low forehead overhung small, evil black eyes.

"Well, what do yer want here?" he said, scowling upon the two hunters.

"I s'pose yer'll give us lodgin' fur a spell, ef we pay fur it," said Josh.

"We have no room for yer, so you'll have to go yer way. I s'pose you belong to the American Company?"

"We belong to no company in partick'lar, though I'll allow that when we hev dealin's, it are always with the Americans."

"You are Americans yourselves—it's plain to see that," said the other.

"Yes, and proud of it, too," answered Josh.

"Well, bear in mind you're now within the British lines and not at liberty for trappin' and huntin' 'cept ten miles south o' this place."

"Come, yer kin pack that," cried Josh, contemptuously. "Many a fine buck hev I killed north of the line, and had a right to, too, as you've killed plenty south of it, on *our* borders."

"We'll see about it!" cried the other, angrily. "If we caught you at it, it would go hard with you, or I'm not Captain Brand."

"Nonsense; I'll never ask your leave, nor that of any other man, to hunt deer wherever I kin find it."

"Don't let us catch you at it," repeated the

other. "You say you want lodgin's here. If you are so much at home on our borders, what need have you for lodgin's at this place?"

"The truth is, we've offended the Injuns and they're arter us. We've had a hard time of it, and need a little rest."

The other looked at him keenly. Then he glanced behind him to make sure that more armed men had emerged from the fort.

These people coming up, formed a sort of ring about the two hunters.

The latter guessed it was their intention to make them prisoners, and under other circumstances they might have endeavored to avoid being captured.

Now, however, they were anxious to get into the fort, to ascertain if Rose and Lefferts were there.

"We don't b'lieve you are *honest* hunters," said the man who had previously spoken, "but that you are a couple of them thievin' tramps and horse-stealers, by which we have been much troubled of late. We'll have to take you to the fort to make sure whether or not that is so."

As he spoke, he made a sign to the men, who closed about the twain.

"Don't be skeered on us," said Josh, "but just lead on and we'll foller."

The party moved forward and soon passed through the gateway of the fort.

Josh and George were conducted to one of the log houses, on entering which the two hunters found themselves confronted, among others, by an Indian. They with difficulty suppressed an exclamation of recognition, for this person was none other than the same old savage to whom they had given shelter and food on that day when he came to inform them of the intended massacre of the schooner's crew. The Indian, however, showed no sign of ever having seen them before. He gazed at them with a calm, impassive face.

"Look at them well, Wouloo, and tell us if they are the party of horse-thieves of whom yer've seen so many, and whom you've so often 'spotted' for us."

To the surprise and consternation of the two hunters, the savage, after a moment's survey, said quietly:

"Yes, Wouloo has seen these men before. THEY ARE HORSE-THIEVES!"

CHAPTER XII.

A HARD SENTENCE.

"Ef ever thar war a liar on 'arth, this Injun is one!" cried Josh.

"That won't go down," cried the man who had previously addressed him. "Wouloo ain't in the habit of lyin', and as we've missed a good many vallerble animals, we'll have to keep you prisoners until we conclude what to do with yer."

The two were now conducted to a strongly-built log house near one of the parapets of the earthwork. The windows of this building had iron bars, and the door was a heavy one, which could be firmly secured on the outside. In the roof, about twelve feet above his head, Josh noticed a scuttle.

"It war easy to escape ef we could git up thar," he remarked to George. "But we don't

want to escape till we find out ef Lefferts and the gal is hyar. I reckon they are, and that our bein' made prisoners under pretense of our bein' hoss-stealers, are the work of that half-breed."

"I should not have thought that Woulloo would have helped them in this thing," said the boy, "after our treating him so kindly."

"Drat the mean cuss! You are never shore of an Injun, although I'll allow that I hev seen exceptions to the rule."

George and his companion now looked through one of the grated windows, hoping to get sight of Lefferts.

They had made no inquiries about him, not wishing to have it known they suspected he was here, lest that should have the effect of putting him on his guard and of making him more careful to keep himself out of their sight.

All at once George laid a hand on his companion's arm.

"I think I see him!" he cried.

"Whar?"

"There—among those men near that house opposite. He wears a slouched hat, and his back is toward us, but I'm sure it is he."

"It does look like him *behind*, ef yer kin go by that, which aren't always the case."

George thought the man would soon turn his face, and that he could thus make sure he was Lefferts, but he was disappointed. After talking for a few minutes with the others, he walked over to a house and entered it without showing his face to the prisoners.

Long hours passed. Neither food nor water was brought to the two; but fortunately, although their arms had been taken from them, they had been allowed to retain their wallets, which contained provisions enough to last for several days.

It was late at night ere they lay down on some straw in a corner, where they slept until dawn.

Then they were aroused by the neighing of a horse. On rising and looking out of the window, they beheld two mounted figures passing through the opened gate of the fort.

George uttered an exclamation.

One of the forms he saw was Rose Williams, and he felt certain the other was Lefferts, although the latter's back was toward him. As soon as they were gone, the gate was closed by the man who had spoken to them on the day before.

"Thunder! they've gone, shore enough!" said Josh.

"It surprises me that Rose should have been willing to go with him!" said George.

"It's all been well planned, yer kin bet," remarked Josh. "The mean scamp has not let the gal know we war hyar. I'll warrant he has carried it all along from the moment he took her from the Injuns, that they had already raised yer ha'r!"

"Yes, and now he has made her believe that he is going to take her home to her brother's—that must be how it is!" cried the boy.

Just as he spoke the door was opened, and several armed men entered, with Captain Brand at their head.

They were accompanied by a man wearing

the loose blouse, leather girdle, clon cap and cross of a missionary.

"If you have anything to say before you die, you had better say it now to this good man!" cried Brand, pointing to the missionary.

"Before we die?" said Josh. "What in thunder do yer mean?"

"Sh!" said the missionary, "your language, my friend, is too strong."

"It's nateral it should be strong," responded Josh—"stronger nor a hull stack o' niggers, under the circumstances. Me and my friend hyar, which hev done no harm to a mortil soul, is threatened with death! What do yer mean?" he added, turning to Brand.

"You are hoss-thieves," was the response.

"We make short work of sich characters heer; we hang 'em. You are to be hung!"

"Yer've no right—yer couldn't hang us 'thout a trial, even though we war hoss-thieves, which aren't the case."

"It's our rule heer. There's been too much of that bizness goin' on lately, and hoss thieves is now made short work of by bein' lynched!"

"It can't be that you approve of our being treated in this way," said George, turning to the missionary.

"I have tried to turn these men from their purpose," he answered, "but it has been in vain. I am now come to hear anything you have to say, and to execute any little mission you may request me to do."

"Then," said George, "I would request you to seek Rose Williams—the young lady who has just left the fort with that villain, Lefferts, and tell her to be on her guard against the rascal. I feel confident he will never take her home—that he means to conduct her somewhere else, and then try to persuade her to marry him!"

The missionary had listened to this remark with looks expressive of surprise.

"The persons to whom you allude," he said, "are already *man and wife*!"

"What!" cried George, in dismay. "Rose Williams married to Lefferts?"

"Yes, I married them on the day before yesterday."

The boy staggered as if from a blow. He seemed to feel this stroke much more than he had the information that he was going to be hung.

"Have you anything more to say?" inquired the missionary, gently.

"Nothing more," gasped George.

Captain Brand, remarking that the execution of the prisoners would take place on the following morning, now left with those who had accompanied him.

Josh tried to console the boy.

"Don't yer go to bein' down 'bout what yer heerd," he said. "Arter all, it shouldn't hev been onexpected. That Lefferts, it seems, has knowed the gal some time, and yer'll always notice that when a nice gal like her thinks she kin never hev the chap she wants, she's pooty shore to take up with some 'farnal scamp. Besides," added Josh, by way of capping his consolation, "ef you're goin' to be hung, what diff'rence kin it make, anyway?"

"True enough," assented the boy.

Josh rolled his eyes up toward the scuttle.

"Ef we could on'y git up thar, I'd risk our bein' hung. From the roof of this house we could jump to the parapet, then down outside the fort."

"Could I not reach it by standing on your shoulders?" suggested the young trapper.

"I reckon not; but yer kin try."

The boy climbed to the tall hunter's shoulders, to discover that he could not touch the scuttle with his hands.

The fate of the two seemed certain.

When night came, they looked wistfully through the bars. It was very dark—just such a night as would favor their escape.

Several hours had passed when suddenly Josh pricked up his ears.

"Did yer heer nothin', boy?"

"No."

"Turn yer ear up toward the roof and listen."

George did so, and fancied he could detect a slight, scraping sound, like that of some one moving.

Presently the scuttle was cautiously raised, and a head was thrust through the opening.

In the gloom—for there was no lamp in the room—the prisoners could not see the face distinctly.

"Who's thar?" inquired Oregon Josh, softly.

"Woulloo!" was the answer, in a low voice.

"What on 'arth does it mean? What yer up to, Woulloo?"

"Me save pale faces! Woulloo not forget pale-faces good to Woulloo. It is well!"

"But you told a lie about us; how is that?" interposed George.

"Lefferts tell Woulloo *must* lie! Brand say so, too. If Woulloo *not* lie, would whip poor Indian to death. But Woulloo say to himself he save good pale-faces, and he will. Here!"

Something dangled down from the speaker's hand. It was a slender rope. The Indian had secured it above to a stick thrown across the scuttle opening.

"Waal, Injun, here goes! Yer a dead corpus ef you is foolin'. Now, little pard, you perceed," and Oregon Josh steadied the rope while George climbed toward the scuttle.

He was soon out of the prison, when Josh quickly mounted, and both were free again!

"Find rifles and powder-horns on odder side," whispered Woulloo. "Me take from room where Brand keep guns."

"Good!" whispered Josh; "but what'll you do with yerself now? Brand will suspect your havin' had a hand in our escape."

"Woulloo don't know 'zactly where go. Go far away and die soon. He old man. He have not long to live!"

"Ef you are old, you war spry enough to git on top of the parapet and jump to the roof. Take my word fur it, Injun, yer'll live longer than yer think."

"No, Woulloo have dream. One of his old chiefs came from the hunting-grounds and told him he would not live for many moons. It is well. He is ready to go!"

"See hyar! yer've a good appertite yet, haven't yer?"

"It is true."

"Waal, then, yer kin be shore that, as the seat of life are in the stummick, you'll live some years, yit. Now, then, foller me, and let's see what kind of a jump yer kin make from this yere parapet."

As he spoke, Josh sprung to the ground, outside of the fort.

Woulloo also sprung, but one foot catching against a root, he fell so heavy against Josh, who was unprepared for the contact, that the hunter tumbled on his seat, dragging with him the Indian, whose whole weight somehow came directly upon his nose.

"Hillo!" muttered Josh. "Fur the Lord's sake! Injun, don't yer talk of dyin' any more. Yer've put my nose out of j'int, fur sartint; which proves you're more apt to kill others than to go under yerself."

George having previously reached the ground, the two hunters picked up their rifles and soon left the fort far behind them in the darkness.

Woulloo then parted from them, and they finally lost sight of his figure in the gloom.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ENCOUNTER.

"It is lucky there was no sentinel on the watch, or we would not have got off so easily," said George.

"Thar's hardly need of a sentinel, as them Nor'westers is on good tarms with all the Injuns, hyarabout," answered the other hunter.

"Which way shall we go now?" inquired George, next morning, as they emerged from a cave, in which they had slept a few hours.

"Kin you ask that? On the tracks of the hosses rid by Lefferts and the gal."

"What is the use?" inquired George. "Now that she has married him, we may as well leave them alone."

"I hev sartint idees of my own, 'bout that," responded Josh, laying his big, horny palm on the arm of the boy, whose sad voice readily aroused the sympathies of this rough man of the wilds. "Don't yer go fur to b'lieve every-thing yer heer!"

"What do you mean, Josh?"

"Jest this, that I'm not *sartint*—mind, I don't say I'm *shore*—that the gal *are* married to that varmint!"

"But the *missionary* would not have lied about it."

"Not ef he *war* a missionary, but I hev my doubts. In other words I don't think *he war* a missionary at all!"

"God bless you, Josh!" cried the boy, joyfully.

"Now don't be in too big a hurry, lad. He *may* hev been a missionary. There's not much use tryin' to catch a fox, 'fore yer trap's sot."

The other's countenance fell.

"He may hev been what he seemed," continued Josh. "but—"

"Go on, Josh!" cried the lad, impatiently—"but what?"

"Waal, oncet on a time I see'd a hoss-thief in Illinois up fur trial. It war years ago, but drat me! ef that chap didn't somehow remind me of the cuss!"

"Josh, you are a 'pealer!'" cried the youth, shaking hands with the speaker.

"Thar are times," said the other, "when a man kin put life in a frozen turnip, and this are one of them times; but don't yer go fur to thaw out too quick, for mind I say I'm not shore—only that the chap looked mou'ty like that hoss-thief, 'cept that he'd gone and disguised hisself in missionary 'possibles.'"

"Then you think the people at that fort are horse-thieves themselves?"

"They may do a little in that line, unbeknown to them as put them in charge of the fort. Sech things hev been, and will be."

"Come, then," cried George, "let us start at once on the trail!"

"You forgit that we hev'n't had breakfast yit. Take my advice, boy; when yer've got anything to do, keep cool about it, and think of everything bearin' on the subject."

When their breakfast was finished the two started to look for the horses' tracks, which they soon found. These tracks led off toward the southeast.

"They'll be fotched up 'fore they go far," said Josh, "as thar's plenty rocks that way which no hoss kin pass 'thout bein' led."

By next day they reached a lofty spur of the Cascade mountains.

"Now then," said Josh, "it are necessary to scout a little in our rear. Them fort people may hev started in pursuit of us, and we must look out fur 'em. You had better keep on till yer come to the top of that peak yer see off thar," he added, pointing out an elevation about half a mile distant, "and thar yer kin be taking a look in yer front until I jine yer."

So saying he moved off toward a thicket behind them, leaving George to go on in the opposite direction.

The boy finally gained the top of the elevation. He scanned the wild country before him, but he could see no sign of those he sought.

Several hours passed, and he saw nothing of Josh. Thinking he had better go and look for him, he was about to descend when he beheld, almost at the very base of the hight, Rose and Lefferts, leading their horses through a narrow gorge between two masses of rock.

The boy, at the risk of breaking his neck, descended the hight and darted into the gorge which the girl and her companion had now passed through.

The moment he emerged from it he saw Rose and Lefferts, now mounted, about to pursue their way for a space on horseback.

They were about fifty yards off, and even at that distance, as Rose now and then turned her head sideways, the lad could perceive that her face wore a distressed, anxious look.

George darted after them with the speed of a young tiger.

Both halting by a stream to give their animals a drink, he soon came up with them, his moccasins having made no noise on the soft ground.

Lefferts had turned to say something to Rose when he beheld the lad, rifle in hand, standing near his horse's flank, glaring upon him.

Hearing the sudden exclamation he made, Rose also turned to see the boy; but ere she could say a word, her horse, which had also got

sight of him and taken fright at the sudden apparition, dashed off a short distance.

Lefferts laid a hand on a pistol in his belt.

"Don't be in a hurry," said George, as he pointed his rifle at the young man's head, "but tell me at once, truly, whether that girl is or is not your wife."

"Yes she is," answered Lefferts.

"No, it is false!" cried Rose, with heightened color and flashing eyes, as she came dashing back on her horse, which she had quickly brought under control.

Lefferts uttered a fierce ejaculation, and, drawing his pistol, fired at the boy's head.

His horse curveting at that moment, saved George's life and also his own, for, otherwise, the two bullets—the one from the pistol—the other from the rifle—would have taken effect.

From his horse, before George could reload, Lefferts aimed again, his pistol having two barrels, and fired.

The boy felt a sharp twinge of pain in his side, followed by the trickling of blood into one of his moccasins.

Resolved to use his strength before it left him, he struck Lefferts with the stock of his piece on the forehead. The half-breed by drawing back, deadened the force of the blow, but it was hard enough to almost deprive him of his senses. Still clinging to the bridle, in a bent position, he now had no command of his horse, which darted off with the speed of an arrow.

George staggered and sunk to the ground. Rocks, trees and sky performed a dance before his dizzy vision.

He felt the soft arms of Rose Williams about him—knew that his head was pillowed on her knee, that her lovely face was above him—then darkness seemed to gather before him. He had become unconscious.

His first sensation, on opening his eyes, was that of motion.

He endeavored to rise, but discovered that he was secured by his blanket to the back of the horse, on which he now perceived he was lying, partly on his side.

The horse was walking, and a girl was leading it by the bridle.

"Rose Williams!" he exclaimed.

She looked up at him and gave a cry of joy.

"Thank God! you are better!" she said.

"You know me, now!"

"What does it mean? How long have I been here?" inquired George, much confused.

She had only to say a few words to refresh his memory. She told him that ten hours had passed since he became unconscious—that he had opened his eyes several times, since then, and raved incoherently.

"How did you get me on the horse? I remember, too, that I was wounded in the side, and that I bled a good deal. The wound now feels as if it had been dressed."

"I will tell you," said Rose, "but you must keep quiet, and not get excited. When you swooned, I knew that something should be done at once. I tied your sash about your side, hoping to stop the flow of blood, but I was unsuccessful, and was in despair, when I heard a grunt, and turned, to see an old Indian standing by me. I was at first startled, but the man

said he knew you, that he was a friend of yours, and that he would do all in his power to help you. He took a tin box from his pocket, saying it contained a poultice made of slipperyelm. With your sash and a kerchief I gave him, he bound up and dressed your wound. Then I got him to put you upon the horse and secure you to it with your rubber blanket. He had informed me that there was a fort fifty miles off, where I could find friends, and he said he would guide me to it."

"Did he tell you his name?"

"Yes, Wouloo."

"I thought so," said George. "But where is he now?"

"Just before you became senseless you had said: 'Wait for my friend. He will come soon.' This showed me that you and some friend had been together lately, and I informed Wouloo of this, thinking he must be the person. But the Indian, to my surprise, said you meant OREGON JOSH, and that if I would wait he would go and look for him, as he must be somewhere near. I saw him go off, and not long after I heard loud cries. I looked from behind a rock and saw enough to guess that Wouloo had been captured and was being carried off by some armed horsemen."

"Ay, the rascals from the fort," cried George. "So they have recaptured the poor fellow."

"I then thought," continued Rose, "that it would be best for me to keep on and try to find the friendly post of which the Indian had spoken, and the direction of which he had pointed out to me."

"And you have seen nothing of Josh Jones?"

"Why, no! I thought the Indian must be mistaken, for Josh Jones was drowned from the wreck."

George soon explained this to the surprised girl.

"If you unfasten my blanket," he then said, "I will try to walk and you can ride. You must be very tired."

"No," she replied. "I now feel as if I had the strength of a man. I am determined to save you, if I can. Do not speak of walking. You could not even stand. I hope to reach the friendly fort by to-morrow."

The boy gazed admiringly at the speaker, who, gentle as she was, showed so brave a spirit. He felt the truth of her words about his strength. He certainly was too weak to walk.

It was now nearly sundown. The sky was covered with heavy black clouds, which foreboded a storm. Before night a furious gale, with thunder and lightning, raged round the travelers. Some drops of rain were falling.

"You must not get wet," said the girl to George.

They were ascending a rocky path among some lofty cliffs, which they would be obliged to cross.

Rose saw in a rock a hollow or cave large enough to hold them, and into this the girl led the horse.

The rain now began to come down in roaring sheets, and some of it was blown into the cave.

The girl took from her shoulders a shawl she had put on, and wrapped it about George, to make sure he should not get wet.

A few hours later, as she still stood in the cave, holding to the horse's bridle, she heard, blended with the din of the storm, a noise which thrilled her with terror.

It was a heavy, rushing sound, which could not be mistaken—that of an avalanche of water—a torrent—descending toward her!

CHAPTER XIV.

A RIDE FOR LIFE.

WHEN "Oregon Josh" left his young friend on the elevation, he made for a thicket a short distance in their rear, and having passed through it, he took a good survey of an open stretch of land before him.

"All right so far," he muttered, "but I mou't as well cross that open and go to them woods beyond."

He did so. Passing through the woods he found himself near a valley, the sides of which were covered with shrubbery.

He had descended a short distance into it when he came upon a path which bore the unmistakable print of horses' hoofs.

"The varmints hev been byar, shore enough, and that lately!" was his mental exclamation.

Stooping, he peered through the shrubbery, when, all at once, his rifle was snatched from his grasp, and he was thrown down and pinioned.

Brand, with half a dozen men, stood over him.

"So, my fine chap, you didn't git off so easy!" said the captain, sneering.

"I'm sarcumvented, I'll allow," replied Josh, coolly.

"We Nor'westers are too much for yer," said Brand. "Yer can't escape us! Where is the boy?"

"I don't know," said Josh. "I left him waitin' fur me, in that direction."

As he spoke Josh made a motion of his head toward the very quarter where he had really left George.

It may seem strange that the hunter should do this, but Josh knew what he was about.

He judged that Brand would be sure to go to search for the boy in a direction exactly opposite to that which he (Josh) had indicated—thinking that the captive was trying to deceive him.

And such was the case.

Josh having been lashed to the back of one of the horses, which had been brought up from the valley, a man seized the bridle, and the whole party, surrounding him, mounted and set out.

Of course their search in the direction they took proved fruitless.

Brand, in an ill-humor, said there was no use of wasting more time, and started for the fort. The band had not gone far when they fell in with Wouloo and captured him, as already described.

"Yer needn't think I've gived up that boy," said Brand to Josh. "I shall set some of the Okes on his trail, and if they git him in their clutches it'll be as well as if he was in mine."

"What hev yer ag'in' the poor boy? He are

no hoss-thief, as yor well know. Better leave him alone," cried Josh.

"I never let any one escape me," said Brand. "I'll not bother with him myself, however, but I'll leave him to the Okes."

Several hours later they reached a camp of these people, who belonged to the same tribe as that which had previously been in pursuit of the two whites.

When Brand told them of the boy, they seemed eager to start upon the trail of one who had already shot several of their men.

They glared fiercely at Josh, and asked the captain to give him up to them.

"Which would yer have, Injuns?" inquired Brand, pointing first to Josh and then to old Wauloo.

"Like have both. Sooner have pale-face, great 'Wizard-Rifle,' if only have *one*!" said the chief.

"I don't know but what my best plan would be to leave you with these people," said Brand. "However, I will give you your choice between being hung or scalped."

"I should prefer goin' with you, by all means," said Josh.

"I s'pose it's because you enjoy my company?" remarked Brand.

"One thing is sartint," replied Josh. "When thar's the devil and some of his imps to choose atween, thar aren't much of a choice."

"Hol hol well said!" laughed Brand, who really seemed to enjoy being compared with the devil. "Here, Injuns, I'll give yer this chap to pick," he added, cutting Wauloo's bonds.

His enemies were around him in an instant like hungry wolves, pulling him from the horse upon which he had been tied.

A tomahawk crashed into his skull, and the next moment his scalp was at the girdle of his slayer.

Brand and his men rode on, and by turning his head partly round, Josh could see the Indians start off to seek his young friend.

His heart sunk.

He felt almost certain that George would be captured.

"Ef I could oncet give these varmints the slip," he thought, "I mou't, with a good hoss under me, reach Fort Okanagan in time to git a party to go with me to meet the lad and save him from the Injuns."

Unperceived he worked at his bonds, but he found that he could not loosen them.

He noticed, however, that the horse he rode was a spirited animal, which would now and then "shy" to one side, giving the man who held the reins some trouble to hold him.

This inspired him with the idea of frightening the horse, and of causing it to dash off away from the others. True, it might be retaken, but, at the same time, there was a chance that it might not. At any rate, the attempt was worth making, although, even should the hunter thus escape his captors, he would still have no way of getting clear of his bonds, unless he should happen to fall in with friends.

The position he lay in—upon his stomach—brought his face close to the horse's head.

Waiting until there was a lull in the conversation of the party, he suddenly applied his mouth to the ear of the horse, and gave utterance to a piercing, unearthly yell, which startled even his companions.

The frightened steed, uttering a loud neigh, gave one tremendous spring sideways, which jerked its reins from the hand of the person who held them, and away it went at a pace more like flying than running.

"Go it, yer frisky critter, go it!" cried Josh. "Hillo, thar, yer cussed varmints! Let's see what yer kin do now!"

The whole party started in pursuit, but, perceiving that the horse was gradually distancing them, Brand, with a fierce cry of rage, ordered his men to fire.

"Try not to hit the hoss," he added, "but I don't care how many bullets yer put in the rider."

All the rifles seemed to go off at once. Josh heard the bullets cutting the air about his body and ears, some of them grazing his legs, arms and hands.

"Ef I war only up now, and had my rifle, I'd soon throw some o' them varmints cold!" he muttered.

The horse had now turned the angle of a lofty rock and was flying along a path through a thicket, which concealed it from the gaze of the pursuers. On it went with unabated speed, its eyes flashing fire and the froth coming like foam from its nostrils.

"Go it, White Lightnin', go on! Yer've proved yerself a true friend to me!" cried Josh.

The hunter could no longer hear or see his pursuers. At the end of an hour, however, he beheld something which struck him with dismay. The path the horse had pursued had described a gradual ascent and now Josh saw the edge of a lofty height before him.

Should the animal plunge from this, certain death to it and its rider must be the result.

"It are all up with me," thought the hunter.

Involuntarily he made a movement as if to liberate his bound wrists; when, to his surprise, the cords he had previously been unable to loosen, readily snapped asunder. An instant's reflection told him that this had been owing to their having been partly cut by the bullets which had been sent after him.

His hands being free, he made immediate use of them, pulling upon the horse's bridle and endeavoring with his voice and by force to check the headlong career of the beast. Used as he was to the management of horses he hoped to be successful, but for some moments, unheeding him, the steed flew on. Gradually, however, he got it under control, and just before it reached the edge of the lofty hill, it turned off to the right as if aware of its danger, and slackened its pace.

"Thunder!" cried Josh, as he gazed far down at the jagged rocks under the hill, "it war a narrer escape. Thar's 'no evil 'thout its good.' Ef them mean skunks hadn't fired at me, I wouldn't hev been able to free my hands so as to turn the horse."

Putting a hand in his pocket he drew forth a clasp-knife, with which he severed the ropes holding him to the animal. Then sitting up—

right and bestriding the horse, he easily managed it.

In the distance he could hear the sound of hoofs, showing that his enemies had not yet given up the pursuit.

He dashed on and by night he could no longer hear those in chase of him.

The sky had darkened, and as the rain poured down, Josh sought shelter under an overhanging rock.

A rock in front of him screened him and the steed from the incoming rain.

"Hello! who's that?" he muttered, hearing above the roar of the storm the sound of approaching hoofs.

By a flash of lightning he caught a glimpse of a single horseman whom he recognized, even at that brief glance, as Lefferts, the half-breed.

"The varmint is alone," he muttered. "What kin that mean?"

As he came nearer, Josh was about to spring out upon him, when he saw the rider dismount and lead his horse toward the shelter he occupied.

The hunter stood motionless, and not until Lefferts was close by him, did he see him.

"Hallo! Who are you?" he cried, somewhat startled.

"Yer'll find out quick enough," came the deep voice of Josh, as he seized him by the throat. He hurled him down and planting his knee on his breast, he thus held him.

Lefferts vainly struggled to free himself.

"It's no use; yer may kick and yer may squarm, but yer've got ter lie thar till I'm ready fur yer to git up. I want to ask you a few questions. In the fust place, whar's the gal?"

"That's nothing to you. I'll not tell you."

"Won't yer? then, by the livin' catamount, I'll choke the life out of yer," cried Josh, tightening his grasp. "Answer 'fore yer 'gin to choke, or it'll be too late."

"I don't know where she is," said Lefferts.

"My horse ran away with me as I was riding along with her, and I've been looking for her ever since."

"It was through you that George and me war captur'd by them cussed Nor'westers and accused o' bein' hoss-thieves, wasn't it?"

"Yes."

"And it war you who wanted to pass off that chap on us as a missionary who had married yer, when all the time he war a scamp—a sort o' hoss-thief?"

"I own it. Now let me up."

Josh allowed Lefferts to rise.

"Now I'll trouble yer fer that rifle slung to yer back," he said. "Your friends hev mine, as well as my pistol, and exchange are no robbery."

As Josh pointed the pistol he had snatched from the belt of the youth at the latter's head, Lefferts sullenly complied, unslinging his rifle and presenting it to the speaker.

The moment he had done so he suddenly disengaged himself from his grasp, sprung upon his horse, and dashed off.

CHAPTER XV.

THE WOUNDED BOY.

WHEN Rose Williams, crouching in the moun-

tain-cave, by the side of the wounded boy, who occupied her horse, heard the roar of the descending torrent she seized the bridle of the steed and hurried to lead him from the cave.

"I do not know which way to go," she cried in despair to the lad.

"Wait a moment and perhaps I can tell you," said George.

He waited for the next flash of lightning, which showed him the full extent of the peril menacing him and the girl.

The torrent, like some live monster, was sweeping down toward them, and the boy doubted if there was any way to avoid it.

"Lead to the left!" he cried.

Rose complied. She saw by a flash a rocky platform and upon this she compelled the horse to mount.

She was about to follow, when the roaring waters caught her and in another moment she would have been dashed whirling and drowning down the steep declivity but for George, who, weak and wounded as he was, had reached over and grasped her by the arm.

With an exertion of strength he could not, in his then condition, have made under ordinary circumstances, he drew her out of the rushing, foaming mass upon the rock.

"Oh, Georgel!" cried Rose, "you have saved me; but I'm afraid you strained yourself."

The boy did not reply.

A flash showed her that he was too faint to speak.

This, however, was only temporary. The beating of the cool rain on his face soon restored him.

"Don't worry about me, Rose," he said.

"But you'd better make sure this is a safe place."

Such proved to be the case; the torrent could not reach them there, but went rushing past.

The storm was not of long duration, and Rose soon found another hollow. There, thoroughly exhausted, George fell asleep, and the girl, wet as she was, sitting on an elevated boulder, with the bridle in her hand, also fell into a slumber, despite her efforts to prevent it.

She awoke with a start, dreaming that some one was speaking to her.

The light of dawn was stealing into the hollow where she sat and at the entrance she beheld, to her dismay, an Indian, whose flattened head gave him something the appearance of a reptile.

"Ugh! girl wake!" grunted the savage, glaring, however, at the boy on the horse.

"Yes!" she gasped, springing to her feet, between him and the wounded lad.

The Indian slowly pulled his tomahawk from his belt, his gaze now settling on the horse.

"For God's sake, don't harm that poor boy!" said Rose. "He is already hurt—wounded badly."

"No want hurt boy—want horse!" responded the savage.

"The horse?"

"Yes—horse belong to Flathead."

On thus learning that the Indian was of the tribe of Flatheads, Rose's alarm was in some

degree allayed, for she had heard George say that these people were not now hostile to the whites. Nevertheless, she fancied that there was something evil in the expression of this person's face, which boded no good to her and her companion.

"The horse cannot belong to you, as it came from one of the forts of the Northwest Company," she said.

"Northwest been 'teal from Flathead! Often 'teal horse—dem pale-face! Ugh! bad pale-face! crooked tongue—crooked finger!"

"But you will not take the horse away from the boy? He will die if you do. After I reach the fort I am going to, the animal shall be restored to you."

The Flathead, still holding his tomahawk, advanced toward the boy.

"Quick, save trouble," he said, grimly. "Take scalp—den boy no want horse!"

Rose, uttering a shriek, motioned the savage back.

"This boy did not steal your horse! Why, then, should you want to kill him?"

"Ugh! boy not belong to Northwest Company?"

"No," and she proceeded to explain.

The Indian returned his weapon to his belt.

"Me look at boy. Don't be 'fraid—me not hurt!"

Trembling, Rose permitted the Indian to get close to the horse.

He scanned the lad closely, and then said:

"It is true; he is bad wounded. But me must have the horse."

"Surely you will not take it now?"

"No. You and boy go with me to Flathead lodges. Then we shall see what will be done."

"Why not let us go to the fort?"

"Does the white girl know where it is?"

"It cannot be far off."

"It is many long mile. The white girl has taken a crooked path—the wrong way. The boy must die before she can get to the fort."

"How unfortunate!" cried Rose, wringing her hands.

As she looked at George, she felt that the Indian's words might come true. He was awake—his eyes wide open—but he lay in a kind of stupor, and did not speak.

"The boy may die before we reach the camp. That is far off, too, and the way is hard. Boy have much pain—'fraid will die *anyway*. *Better kill now!*"

And again the savage loosened his tomahawk.

"No! no! for God's sake, no!" screamed Rose.

A grim smile played about the lips of the Indian. He looked alternately at George and the girl, as if undecided whether to make away with the lad or not.

The girl pleaded wildly for the life of her young friend, and the savage finally, but with evident reluctance, returned his tomahawk to his belt.

"Perhaps best not," he said. "We see Chief Snake Eye. He will say what shall be done. Come!"

He seized the bridle of the horse and led the animal from the hollow.

"Wait a moment," said Rose.

With a cup she had taken from the lad's wallet she procured water from a spring close at hand and applied it to his lips.

He drank a little, and his eyes shone with a grateful look. His lips moved, but no sound came from them.

"Been lose too much blood," said the Flathead. "Not live long!"

He moved forward, still leading the horse. Rose followed.

Now and then, as they proceeded, she could see the evil eyes of the Indian turned toward the half-senseless sufferer. At such times a terrible fear would take possession of her, and she would watch the savage closely, lest he should suddenly turn, ere she could prevent him, and strike the helpless rider with his tomahawk.

At last, soon after noon, the lodges of the Flatheads were reached.

The Indians lounging about the camp showed no curiosity at the appearance of these three people in this manner.

At length a stout savage, whose eyes under his flattened head gleamed like those of a serpent, advanced from the principal lodge.

"Ugh!" he ejaculated. "Who are these pale-faces, and why has Wachoo brought them here?"

Wachoo, also speaking in English explained.

"Boy most dead," he added, in conclusion.

"Why not kill, then?" said the chief. "Death is better than pain."

"No! no! I am sure he will recover!" cried Rose.

Snake Eye advanced to the horse and looked closely at the boy. He removed some of his clothing and gazed at the wound.

"He is young and his frame is strong. But the wound is deep. We shall see. He may get well."

He then spoke to a group of Indians near, and George was lifted from the horse and carried into one of the lodges.

"You will let me be with him?" said Rose.

"The white girl may stay with him, sometimes," answered the chief.

She was permitted to enter the lodge, where George now lay stretched upon a buffalo-skin. An old Indian—evidently a medicine-man—was examining the wound in his side.

Rose watched him closely, and when she saw him take some herbs from a bag in a corner and put them in a small pot with water, she knew there was hope.

The old man went out and soon returned with the pot of herbs steaming. He poured some of the liquid down George's throat, then, bruising the herbs, he prepared a poultice, which, with a piece of cloth, he applied to the wound. Soon after the boy fell into a deep sleep, from which he did not awaken until several hours later.

Rose had heard of the skill of Indians in dressing wounds, but she was hardly prepared for the happy change in the lad. His eyes looked natural, and he turned a look of recognition on the faithful girl by his side.

"Where are we, Rose? How long have we been here?" he said.

"A few hours. We are in a camp of the Flatheads."

"Is that really so?" cried George, looking surprised.

"Yes; but how do you feel now?"

"Ever so much better!" he answered. "I suppose an Indian doctor has been helping me."

At that moment the medicine-man who had left the lodge for a moment, returned. Wishing to propitiate him, Rose said, pointing to George:

"This is wonderful! You are a great medicine!"

The old fellow, although he did not show it, was evidently tickled by this appreciation of his skill.

He looked at the wound, applied a fresh poultice, and said:

"It is well!"

"Is the hurt deep?" inquired George, "or is it only a flesh wound?"

"It is both."

"I'm glad I shall pull through," said George to Rose.

"I am sure you never would but for this great medicine-man," said Rose.

George gave her a warning look.

When the doctor did not observe him, he whispered in her ear:

"Don't put it on too thick! An Indian is quick to see what you are at!"

Rose colored. This was the first time in her life she had ever been artful with any person.

"I thought my praising him would make you more safe here," she answered.

"I was not blaming you. You were perfectly right, under the circumstances; but I thought it best to warn you. The Indians are what Downeasters call very *cute* in some things. In fact they go *too far*—are even *suspicious*, thinking you mean what you do not."

"Do you think these people are dangerous—that they will think of harming us?"

"I don't know. Lately some of the whites have been pretty rough with them—have cheated them and stolen their horses."

Rose turned pale.

"Oh, dear! I wish we were away from this place!" she said.

"Don't be alarmed, and especially don't show that you are."

In about a week from this time George was so far recovered that he would have been able to continue, at a slow pace, the journey to Fort Okanagan.

But, while the two young people were generally well treated by these Indians, who allowed each a comfortable lodge to sleep in, and supplied them with food, yet they could not help noticing that a strict watch was kept upon their movements.

"I am well enough to go now," said the boy, one evening, to the chief. "Believe me, I shall not soon forget the kindness of Snake Eye."

"Ugh!" grunted the latter. "It is well! Time enough to go. Better wait till get stronger."

And he walked off, as if not caring to hear more on the subject of the lad's departure.

On the day before a party of the Flatheads had had a combat with the Okanagans, and had taken a few scalps. George had heard

some of the Indians say that two of their men had been captured, one of them a son of Snake Eye, and were prisoners among the enemy.

Some hours after he had spoken to Snake Eye, he was surprised and dismayed to see Lefferts enter the camp, and shake hands with the chief.

CHAPTER XVI.

BAFFLED.

It was a clear, moonlight night, so that George could distinctly see, through an opening in his lodge, the faces of the Indian and his companion.

All the savages except the chief and the guard posted outside the camp, had retired for the night.

Feeling sure that Lefferts's present interview with Snake Eye concerned him and Rose, he stole cautiously out of the lodge, and crouched, unperceived, in the shadow of the one near which stood the Indian and his visitor.

"It is good," said the chief. "My brother says he comes from the enemy, but I know he means well, for he is the friend of all the red-men. He trades with them, and he does not steal their horses."

"You are right," said Lefferts. "They all know me as a brother. But the Okanagans lately hunted me, for I stole a prisoner from them—a white girl, named Rose Williams. I wanted to make her my wife, and that was why I took her away. A few days ago the Okanagans captured me. They would have scalped me, but I prevented it by telling them that, if they did, the Northwest Company would avenge my death, and would trade with them no more. I also told them that the white girl had treated me badly, that she had run away from me, and that, were it in my power, I would give her up to them. I had met with a Flathead, and he had told me that both the girl and the pale-face boy were with his people. I would try to persuade the Flatheads to give them up to the Okanagans! Now that is why I have come here," added Lefferts, his visage turning almost black with hatred. "I would see the scalps of the girl and the boy at the belts of the Okanagans!"

"My brother's words are as clear as the moon," answered the chief. "He wants revenge; but he must remember that the Okanagans are the foes of the Flatheads. Snake Eye does not want to give them up. He would keep them as hostages for his stolen horses. Let the horse-thieves among your company give him back his horses, and he will give them the boy and the girl."

"Listen, chief," responded Lefferts. "Among the enemy are now two Flathead prisoners, one of them your own son. Well, the Okanagans have sent me to tell you that, if you will give up to *them* the boy and the girl, they will return to *you* the captive Flatheads! What says the chief, now?"

The savage drew himself up, proudly.

"The son of Snake Eye is not afraid to die! He would not have sent you to save his life! Me have another son!"

"Your words are good," said Lefferts. "but

why not make the exchange? The Flatheads are not afraid to die. That I know. The Okanagans, too, know it well—I heard them say so. But wherefore the use of needless death?"

"My brother talks well," replied Snake Eye. "His words shall be kept in mind. Go, now, and tell the Okanagans that Snake Eye will think of it. Come again, when the sun is there," he added, pointing above his head, "and you shall hear more!"

Lefferts bowed with a flattering air of profound respect, and left the camp.

George then returned to his lodge to think over what he had heard. He doubted not that Snake Eye would decide to make the exchange of which Lefferts had spoken, and he therefore resolved on an attempt to leave the camp with the girl. But he had little hope of success, for the camp was surrounded by the vigilant look-outs and scouts of the Flatheads.

Having watched until he had seen the chief retire to his lodge, the boy repaired to that of Rose, who slept in one occupied by another girl—an Indian, named Wynone.

The greatest caution was necessary. George softly pulled aside the skin front of the tent and looked in. But detection followed at once.

The lad saw a pair of black eyes gleaming upon him in the partial gloom, through the long, disordered meshes of raven hair that now overhung the face, and he knew that it was the Indian girl—Wynone—who saw him, while the low, regular breathing at the further side of the tent denoted that Rose was asleep.

Before George could draw back, the girl spoke in a low voice:

"What does the white boy want?"

The lad crept into the tent.

"I would speak to Rose."

"Go away! This is no place for boy!"

Rose, who, as usual, lay dressed upon her couch of skins, was awakened by the voices.

"George—is that you?" she whispered.

"Yes," and in a low voice he proceeded to tell her what he had heard.

Wynone could not hear what they said, but she now came forward and laid a hand on the arm of Rose.

"Come, Wynone no child; she know what been say, though she not hear. You want to get away? It is well. Wynone don't care—Wynone help!"

Rose could not repress a smile, for she well knew why the other would not object to her escaping. The Indian maiden liked the white girl, but at the same time she was jealous of her.

One of the chief's sons, whom it was understood she was going to marry, had praised to her the beauty of the fair captive, whom he evidently admired.

"You will help us?" said the boy, joyfully.

"Yes; can go now. See!"

She picked up a large, broad-rimmed hat of her own, ornamented with flowers and a gay ribbon, which she placed on the young girl's head in such a way that it concealed her face.

Then over her shoulders she threw a long ornamented deer-skin robe, which would entirely hide her dress.

"Rose, you are well disguised," said George; "but how am I to be?"

Wynone blushed.

"It can be done," she said, and from a corner she took one of those long, trimmed blankets, which are sometimes worn by the Indians.

"Secane" (the name of her intended,) "gave Wynone this blanket to keep her warm when she was cold. You can put it on, and it will hide you."

George donned the blanket in such a way that the upper part hung from his head, nearly hiding his face. As it was now midnight and the moon had gone down, the time was favorable for escape, a deep gloom having settled about the place.

The boy, taking the girl's hand, boldly sauntered with her out of the camp. They had not proceeded many steps when they were met by one of the armed Indian guards.

He peered at them, but mistaking them for Wynone and her lover, he stepped aside, allowing them to pass.

A little further on they met another savage, who seemed to look at them more closely than the first one had done.

But he too seemed satisfied that all was right, and they passed on.

Thinking they would meet no more of the Indian guard the boy's spirits rose.

But as they were moving through a thicket, along a narrow path, they descried, a short distance ahead of them, the outlines of a third figure.

This person stood directly in their way, and as they made a movement to pass him, he sprang in front of them, pointing a rifle toward them.

"Ugh! Who you?" he cried.

"Wynone and Secane!" answered George, trying to speak in a guttural voice although it was evident to him, that the very fact of the Indian's addressing him in English showed that he suspected something wrong.

"Enough! Secane not can be twice! *Me am Secane!*"

George was struck with consternation at this declaration, knowing now that he was detected, for it was to Secane himself he had tried to pass himself off as that person.

The young Indian, unknown to Wynone, had evidently gone off on a sort of scouting tramp, and was returning when he met the two fugitives.

George kept his eye on the rifle, for an instant; then, as quick as lightning, knocking it upward, causing it to go off, he jerked it from the grasp of the savage.

Ere he could make use of it, however, he was seized from behind by several Indians, who had accompanied the chief's son, and who had been lying concealed in the shrubbery.

"Why try to leave?" inquired Secane. "Flat-head no want to hurt."

To this the boy made no reply. Rose and he were led back to the camp, and a guard was now kept about the lodge occupied by each.

Secane reproved Wynone for trying to help the prisoners to escape. The Indian girl was much dejected at their failure, especially when

she noticed the admiring gaze her lover fixed upon Rose while he was speaking to her.

CHAPTER XVII.

FATED!

On the next day Lefferts again came into the camp. The chief had held a council with his principal warriors, and it had been decided that Rose and George should be given up to the Okanagans, in exchange for the two Flathead prisoners.

"Snake Eye has had a talk," said the savage to Lefferts, "and it shall be so. Where are the Okanagans?"

"About half a mile from here," replied the half-breed.

"How many?"

"Ten warriors. Snake Eye's son and the other man are with them. If you wish you can send as many men as you like to take the prisoners to them. You need not be afraid. The enemy will keep their word."

"Snake Eye is not afraid," answered the other, drawing himself up. "To prove it, he will send only six warriors. Six Flatheads are enough for twelve Okanagans!"

"That is good!" said Lefferts, wishing to humor the boasting chief.

Rose and George were led from their lodges.

At sight of Lefferts the young girl could not conceal the expression of disgust his presence now caused her.

His eyes flashed with triumph, and he cast a look of hatred at George.

"Who has the best of it, now?" said the half-breed.

"You are a mean scamp," said George. "You might at least have spared Rose."

"I never spare those who have treated me as you and she have done," answered Lefferts, malignantly.

The six warriors were soon ready to escort the prisoners. Lefferts took the lead as guide, and it was not long ere the ten Okanagans were seen ahead, with their prisoners.

On confronting each other the two parties glared at one another in no friendly manner, and more than one hand was unconsciously laid on tomahawks or knife.

George hoped that they would get into a quarrel, in which case he and Rose might contrive to escape.

"Why has Snake Eye sent but six of his warriors?" said Tenano, the leader of the Okanagans to Secane, who headed the others.

"Because six Flatheads are enough for ten Okanagans!" answered Secane, spiritedly.

"That is not so," replied Tenano. "The Flatheads are all squaws!"

"We could make squaws of the Okanagans with our tomahawks. They would beg for their lives!"

Tenano grasped his tomahawk.

"We will show the Flatheads that we take lives, without begging for them!"

"Ugh!" "Good!" "It is true!" and other expressions were heard among the Okanagans, while, as with one simultaneous motion, every tomahawk was drawn on the other side.

Lefferts interposed. "Remember," he said,

"that you did not come here to fight. There will be plenty of chances for that some other time. You are both very brave, but this is no time to show it. You came here to exchange prisoners. Let it be done, peaceably, and then go your different ways."

Lefferts had a very persuasive way with Indians, and his words were effective, greatly to the disappointment of George.

Under his supervision the exchange was made, and the two parties then separated.

The arms of the boy and girl were bound behind their backs, and they were led to the camp of the Okanagans.

The chief came to look at them.

"Ugh!" he grunted, with much satisfaction. "It is good!" The Okanagans have long been on the trail. At last the two pale-faces are here, and Bearfoot has them in his claws! Their death shall be long and painful, for they have caused Bearfoot to lose many of his men. They shall not live to see the sun go down!"

"Bearfoot should kill them, now!" said Lefferts. "He had better make sure of them, for he knows not what might happen before many hours."

Evidently, the malicious half-breed was eager to gloat over the sufferings of the two.

"No," answered Bearfoot. "They will never escape the Okanagans again. But he would make them suffer long. They must not die too soon."

Lefferts, knowing he could not persuade the chief, was obliged to content himself with the plans of the savage.

Bound and helpless, the two prisoners, well guarded by Indians, who were instructed to brain them immediately in case of any attack being made on the camp, awaited their fate.

Rose was very pale, but she bore up bravely, uttering not a word of complaint, although the torture of suspense was, with no hope of escape, as Bearfoot had intended, worse than the instant performance of the deed would have been.

The two were kept near the foot of a tree, where they finally saw the preparations which were being made for their execution.

At the base of a willow, to which they were to be bound, fagots—both wet and dry—with a few green branches interspersed to hinder the fire from burning too fast, were piled in a heap.

When this should be lighted, the dense smoke would add to the torments of the sufferers, and the savages be enabled all the longer to watch them writhe and twist in their agony.

Meanwhile, Lefferts walked to and fro uneasily, and occasionally mounted a high rock to look if there was any sign that the horrid deed would be prevented by an interruption from the hostile tribe.

From the rock he had a good view of the country, except in one direction—on the right—where a dense thicket extended far back from near that side of the camp. He knew that Bearfoot had a few scouts posted in the thicket; still he felt uneasy, knowing that a cautious enemy might contrive to pass them unperceived.

As the moment approached when the prisoners were to be conducted to the willow and made fast to it, Lefferts, for the third time, mounted the rock.

He felt relieved on still seeing nothing to forebode an interruption.

"Good!" he muttered between his clinched teeth. "I shall have my revenge for being slighted by that girl, and being thrown over for that cursed boy. As she will not have me, I swear she shall have no other man! Yes, and not only has she jilted me, but she has been the means of this scar, which has so disfigured me that any woman would now shudder to look at me!"

As he spoke he laid a hand on the ghastly scar that marred his forehead, and which bore the repulsive shape of the two extended paws of a bear, with the claws protruding—for such were the figures graven on the end of George's rifle-stock with which he had struck his enemy, and which had left their imprint there, probably never to be effaced.

Lefferts now looked down, to see the Indians leading Rose and George to the tree.

To this they were both bound with tough thongs, and one of their foes was about to apply the torch when Lefferts reeled and fell with a thud from the top of the rock at the feet of the Indian!

"Ugh!" grunted all the savages, simultaneously.

The one with the torch stooped, and, raising the half-breed's head saw, in the left temple, a hole from which a small streak of blood had oozed.

It was evident that he had been shot—that a bullet had entered his brain, and yet no sound of a rifle had been heard!

The savages looked at each other, and could not help, on this occasion, showing their surprise by grunts and ejaculations.

George thought at once that here was a chance, perhaps, for him to save himself and his companion by working on the superstitions of the Indians.

"You heard no shot," he said, "but there will be plenty more of the same kind. There are spirits watching over the white girl and me. It was one of them who fired that shot!"

Bearfoot looked keenly at the speaker.

"The pale-face has a double tongue—he would lie to save his life, and he is not to blame. But Bearfoot does not believe him! He would like the pale-face to tell him how this man was shot, when there was no noise. The rifle has a loud voice, so why is this?"

"Will the Indian set us free, if we tell him?" gasped Rose.

"Yes," answered the cunning savage, but George knew he would not keep his word, and so he informed the girl in a whisper.

To gain time, for of course he inferred that whoever had sent the shot was friendly to him, George kept up the subject as long as he was able to do so.

At length, however, the chief gave the word, and the torch was applied to the fagots about the two bound prisoners!

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

WHEN Lefferts escaped from him on that stormy night previously alluded to, "Oregon

Josh" knew that it was useless to lose time in pursuing the fugitive.

He therefore remained in the hollow waiting for the tempest to abate.

At about midnight, having managed to procure a few hours' sleep despite his uncomfortable situation, Josh continued his journey, taking a direction which would, were he unmolested, lead him to Fort Okanagan, where he could obtain the assistance of some hunter friends in behalf of Rose and George.

Captain Brand and his men had evidently lost track of him, and had given up the pursuit, for he saw no sign of the party.

He was obliged to make many detours to avoid roving bands of hostile Indians who infested this part of the country, so that a week elapsed from the time of his setting out ere he found himself within twenty miles of his destination. Without knowing it he was about that distance from the camp of the Okanagans, to whom, on that same day, Rose and George were being conducted.

As he was passing a thicket, a few Flathead scouts suddenly emerged to view.

Believing these savages were not unfriendly, Josh kept on toward them.

"Ugh! how do?" said a tall fellow, stepping forth and bowing with the courtesy natural to an Indian.

Josh recognized in him a person with whom he had occasionally traded.

"Hello! how are you, Mocone?" he said. "Glad ter meet yer, I sw'ar! I reckon yer may be able to give me some news 'bout a sartint white boy and gal who are my pertiklar friends."

"Mocone has seen them. He left them in the Flathead camp to-day. He did not know they were the friends of his white brother or he would have spoken the good word for them with Snake Eye. Now it is too late. When Mocone left the camp the chief was getting ready to give up the white boy and girl to the Okanagans in exchange for two Flathead prisoners."

"Good Lord! yer don't say so!" cried Josh in dismay. "Then I b'lieve I'll be too late to save 'em!"

"Perhaps so—perhaps not. Some of the hunter's white brothers are coming now from the fort. I have seen them from the top of a tree. They are not far off. They will go with you to rescue the pale-face boy and girl."

"Whar are they?" cried Josh, eagerly.

"Go top of little hill and you see!" replied Mocone.

Josh urged his horse swiftly forward and, mounting the slight ascent, he beheld a welcome sight.

Not four hundred yards ahead a party of about eighty hardy trappers and hunters, all mounted, were approaching.

The spectator soon met them. A hearty greeting took place, for Josh was acquainted with most of them.

Among them there was one man named Wilkins, who had been a gunsmith, but who had given up his trade and had become a well-known scout and hunter. Besides his rifle, he carried another weapon of a different shape—an AIR-GUN, which often did him good service.

The moment Jones told the party about Rose and George every man vowed, with hearty good-will, that he would do his best to rescue the young people.

Having learned from the Flatheads the location of the Okanagans' camp, the whole squadron of gallant hunters dashed forward in that direction.

They made a fine show—these brown, hardy fellows in buckskin, with their rifles slung across their backs, and their knives and pistols in their belts.

Wilkins being mounted on the fleetest horse, outdistanced his companions. He reached the thicket near the Okanagan camp while his friends were several miles in the rear.

Knowing there must be Indian scouts in the woods, he rode on as if about to pass the place, but, when a short distance from it, he entered it, screened from observation by tall shrubbery near his path.

Leading his horse by the bridle, he approached within fifty yards of the camp, and he was now able to see the boy and girl bound to the tree, awaiting their fate.

Above them, on a rock, he beheld Lefferts, whom he at once inferred was the person the Flatheads had spoken of to Josh as the one who brought about the surrender of the two to their enemies, and he realized the importance of dislodging this keen lookout from his position, knowing also that his death from an air-gun, which made no noise, would puzzle the Indians and put off for a short time the execution of their intended victims.

Taking careful aim, he discharged the deadly shot, with the result already shown.

Then he anxiously watched for the coming of his friends.

Would they come in season to save the boy and girl?

It was doubtful, although Wilkins fancied he could hear the sound of their horses' hoofs not far off.

Minute after minute passed.

The fagots had been lighted about the lad and his fair companion, and a dense cloud of smoke now rolled around them.

"God help us!" gasped Rose.

The smoke nearly suffocated the two, and poor Rose gasped for breath.

A few minutes later the flames began to shoot up, and now the heat was almost unbearable.

Both the young people writhed and twisted in agony, while half-smothered shrieks escaped the girl.

These shrieks were drowned by the whoops and yells of the savages as they gazed upon their victims, while dancing about the fire, wildly flourishing their tomahawks and clashing them together.

Now more green branches were thrown upon the fire to prolong the torture, and in that horrible moment Rose dashed her head against the tree, hoping to thus end her sufferings at once. But her long, thick black hair deadened the force of the concussion, so that she was only partly stunned.

It was at that critical moment that the Indian scouts were seen running toward the camp, one or two of them dropping stone dead as several rifles cracked.

"Hooraw! hoop! whoo-oo-p! hyar they are, boys!" came the ringing voice of Oregon Josh, as, at the head of the squadron of gallant hunters, he charged upon the camp.

A rifle volley followed, and a number of savages dropped.

In an instant all was confusion among the Okanagans. Taken by surprise, they fled "helter-skelter," and in a few minutes not a live Indian was in sight.

Meanwhile, Josh and several of his companions had scattered the burning fagots to right and left, and freed the captives.

Neither was as yet much injured. Rose was nearly unconscious, but a little brandy, poured by Jones into her mouth, brought her to.

Explanations followed.

"You came just in time, Josh. A few minutes longer would have been too late," said George.

"Yer kin bet we didn't let ther grass grow under our feet when we heerd whar yer war," said Josh.

All the hunters shook hands with the boy, with some of whom he was acquainted.

Then they sat down under a large tree near the thicket, and had dinner.

Cheered by the presence of these brave fellows, Rose soon recovered her good spirits.

Before night of the next day, the boy and girl, with Jones and some of the other hunters, who acted as an escort, reached Fort Okanagan, where they were kindly received.

A few days later, in company with a large party, Rose, George, and Josh started for the young girl's native town.

There they arrived in due time, and it is hardly necessary to say that the hunters met with a cordial reception from the grateful brother of the young girl.

Not long after, Josh and his young friend George set out on another trapping expedition, but not until the boy had contrived to win a confession from Rose that she loved him, and a promise that she would eventually become his wife.

Nor was she a girl to break her word. A few years later she and George were married, and I do not think you will find a happier couple than they are in Oregon City, or in any other part of the United States.

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